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MURAL PAINTING IN AMERICA

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JOHN LA FARGE: "The Ascension." Decoration of the chancel of the Church of the Ascension, New York City

Example showing an almost equal balance of landscape and figures

MURAL PAINTING IN AMERICA

THE SCAMMON LECTURES

DELIVERED BEFORE THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO, MARCH, 1912, AND SINCE GREATLY ENLARGED

BY

EDWIN HOWLAND BLASHFIELD

WITH NUMEROUS REPRODUCTIONS OF REPRESENTATIVE WORKS

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1923

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Printed in the United States of America

Published November, 1913

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FOREWORD

Mural Painting may safely be called the most exacting, as it certainly is the most complicated, form of painting in the whole range of art; its scope includes figure, landscape, and portrait; its practice demands the widest education, the most varied forms of knowledge, the most assured experience. Save by the initiated it is apt to be misapprehended, as a form of art at best demanding little but arrangement, fancy, lightness of hand, at worst as a commercial product calculable as to its worth by the hour and the square foot. It is the object of this book to try to make a fair statement of the real demands of Mural Painting, and to endeavor to suggest its real value. The book is based upon six lectures delivered in March, 1912, at the Art Institute of Chicago, under the auspices of the Scammon Foundation, but since then, a nearly equal amount of entirely new matter has been added.

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INTRODUCTION TO ILLUSTRATIONS

LACK of space makes it impossible to give in this book a more complete representation of the work of American mural painters. Young as the school is, an adequate presentation would require many score, indeed even some hundreds, of illustrations.

William Morris Hunt, whose paintings fell from imperfectly plastered walls, and John La Farge, whose wise work remains to us as a cause for lasting pride, were the pioneers, and were closely followed by Will H. Low, with his ceiling in the Waldorf. McKim's great enterprise of the Boston Public Library, with the presentation of the work of Puvis de Chavannes, John S. Sargent, and Edwin A. Abbey, was nearly contemporaneous with the building of the World's Fair of Chicago, the first big general experiment in American decoration, when twenty mural painters at least tried their 'prentice hands. Only a few years later nearly the same group of men, but with many others added to their number, decorated the Library of Congress in Washington. American mural painting was now fairly launched both in the East and in the West.

In the latter, where the Chicago Exhibition had given such an impulse, the movement became immediate and active in the decoration of the State capitols of Minnesota and Iowa and later of Wisconsin and South Dakota. Somewhat later still began the decoration of the Federal Building in Cleveland and of many other important court-houses and post-offices (including the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh) throughout the Middle West. In the East the decoration of the Library of Congress was soon followed by that of the Baltimore court-house, the Boston State House, the court-houses of Newark, Wilkes-Barre, Youngstown, Jersey City, the University Club of New York, the College of the City of New York, and a whole succession of libraries, churches (notably the Church of the Paulist Fathers in New York), hotels, theatres, schools, and private dwellings. Very early among the important Eastern decorations must be accounted also the lunettes at Bowdoin College and the panels painted for Mendelssohn Hall, New York, by Robert Blum.

Upon many of these buildings whole groups of artists were employed, and such experiments as the decoration of the State capitols of Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, the court-house of Baltimore, the Federal Building in Cleveland, have taught lessons to the painters and public alike, affording to the former a practice indispensable to success, and helping the latter to an appreciation of the gradual growth of

mural art in America. This practice was invaluable not only to the men who had planned the decoration but to their assistants, who aided them in carrying it out and who thus became in their own turn planners and directors of important decorative enterprises.

There has been space in this book for representation of only a few of our mural painters and men have been left out who are quite as good as many of of those included, for the list is long. Judging from the latter, American artists, many of them at least, have a natural inclination toward decoration, for one at once associates a highly developed decorative sense with the names of such painters as Vedder, Cox, Parrish, Miss Oakley, Barry Faulkner, Jules Guérin, and indeed many others.

In the selection of reproductions for this book an attempt has been made to choose subjects which illustrated the decorative practice of the mural painter as influenced by varying conditions, these conditions being in some cases indicated or explained in footnotes. It should be remembered that these little reproductions, each covering only a few inches of paper, represent in many cases wall-paintings fifty feet long. It is easy to realize that such inadequacy of proportion can be only explanatory and may not pretend to realistic presentation.

No complete list of American mural paintings exists; the best thus far is that published by Miss Flor-

ence N. Levy in her *Art Annuals*. It is to be hoped that before long a complete catalogue may be made containing not only the names of the artists of the subjects of the mural panels and of their whereabouts but also a memorandum of their dimensions.

The author desires to give an explanation of the fact that the examples of conventional shapes of panels, also of experimental and other working drawings, are made up wholly from his own works. The development of the subject required a large number of examples, and their number in turn necessitated such a diminution of size, that the author did not feel at liberty to ask other artists to consent to such a miniature reproduction of their work.

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I

THE IMPORTANCE OF DECORATION

I

THE IMPORTANCE OF DECORATION

I

It is the theory of a certain group that art is for artists, that it can be truly felt and known only by them, and that outside a charmed circle of their own no opinion is worth listening to. There are others who believe that the mysterious force which created the beauty of the world, earth and sky, shore and sea, or, under the hand of man, what we call art, did not do it for the benefit of any close corporation, even of artists.

Yet from the people who look most eagerly for that beauty come the artists, therefore they may claim the right to be pioneers and leaders. On the other hand, the public is as essential to the creation of art as is handle to blade; it drives and enforces the purpose of the artist. There is need for the advisory companionship of the cultured non-professional, the statesman, historian, ethnographer, to insist upon types, to emphasize points in the celebration of wise policy, to show us how and where to illuminate the history of our people. But at their

elbow must be the professional eye and hand to model those types, to compose that celebration, to mix the colors for that illumination, otherwise the noblest words may be set to sorry music. For the music's harmony is made up of the diverse yet concordant contribution of many minds, the sober sense of one, the dreams of another, aspiration and restraint, but all co-ordinated in the end by him who can confer plastic shape.

Architecture has been called an occupation for kings, but it is because kings, presidents, and governments can summon together the trained workers, who approach by many paths, who bring brains and tools, eye, hand, and book-knowledge, that the governing fiat may create a Parthenon, a cathedral, a Taj, or a national capitol.

If we try to recognize man's earliest cravings for beauty, and if we hark backward to the voices which in the history of his development have been mightiest, to the Bible, the Iliad, the Divine Comedy, the great dramas of the Greeks, and later of the English, we realize that they were, for the enormous majority of men, *voices*. They made their appeal directly through the ear to the mind. The people sat in circle about sage or prophet or poet, and *listened* to him. In the Orient, which has stood comparatively still, and where few people read, you may see them doing it to-day. The admonition or sentiment or story was repeated by the listeners, repeated in

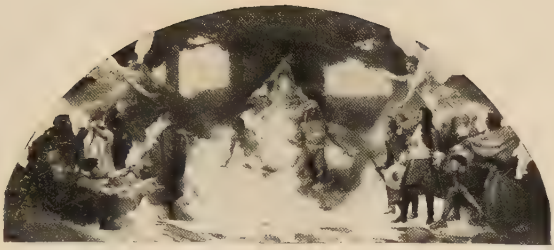
chorus; set to music it became the hymn or the popular song, and in such shape it made its strongest uttered appeal to the mind and senses through the ear. But the eye of man admits an even more immediate appeal; with the rude and uncultivated the road to the mind from the eye seems still shorter than from the ear. Not even the Anacreontic song would stir quite as quickly as the carved and painted relief of nymph and faun, not even the hymn to the deity could strike as forcibly and immediately as the colossal goddess Athene shining in gold and ivory upon her pedestal. Not even the most fluent narrator could unfold his story so swiftly as could the frieze of the great altar of Pergamon. In the condemnation of the graven image the Jewish lawgiver relied mightily upon the spirituality of his people, but in the West, from Egypt to Ireland, the rule of the iconoclast has been short. The temple and the cathedral spoke to the eye, but they spoke as loudly as did Iliad or Bible, and they told the same story. No one knew this better than did the priest, whether he were pagan or Christian, wore fillet or chasuble, or scapular indeed, for as monk he took up brush and chisel himself. All over the antique and mediæval world, throughout the Greek islands, the mountains of Asia Minor, the plains of Europe, the forests of the north, the priest set up the artist as schoolmaster, and his school became the public building.

"Pictures are the books of the ignorant," said St. Augustine, and to appeal to their unlettered citizens the old republics used them, knowing that few can grasp an idea, but that a visible, tangible image is easily understood.

In Athens twenty-two hundred years ago, in Rome eighteen hundred years ago, the man who lacked the power or the will or the time to read went to the public buildings to learn history, which he found there painted and sculptured so plainly that he learned without effort. To-day, the same citizen in Paris walks around the courtyard of the Invalides, and easily gets the battles of the republic by heart. At the Panthéon he is taught who civilized his country and who fought for it; he sees Charlemagne as civilizer, St. Louis as lawgiver, Jeanne d'Arc as liberator. When he goes for whatever business may be to the *mairie* or headquarters of his particular ward, he finds that famous artists have celebrated and dignified the various public functions performed there by carving and painting the walls with subjects which refer to them. At the Sorbonne, which is the temple of science and law, he is immediately taught something about things very desirable indeed to know, yet which would never have occurred to him if he had not seen them painted. He can't help asking, for instance, what that means—that man in the fresco who is binding up a wounded soldier's leg, while others in armor are

EDWIN H. BLASHFIELD: Showing various shapes of panels common to the practice of a mural painter

I. (Wide pendentive) Hudson County Court-House. II. (Narrow pendentive) Youngstown Court-House. III. (Depressed lunette) Cleveland Trust Company. IV. (Portion of collar) Dome of Library of Congress



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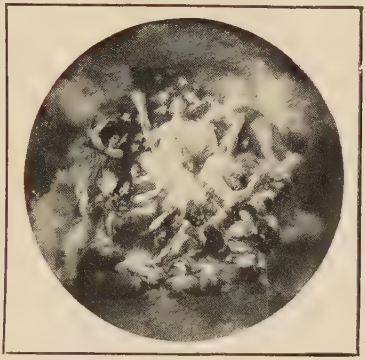

VII

See illustration facing page 14

VIII

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EDWIN H. BLASHFIELD: Showing various shapes of panels common to the practice of a mural painter (continued)

V. (Lunette) Minnesota Capitol. VI. (Square) Panel in Appellate Court, New York City. VII. (Dome crown) Wisconsin State Capitol. VIII. (Rectangle with rounded ends) Panel in house of Mr. Adolph Lewisohn

defending the wall, and a priest and acolyte stand by with crucifix and wafer to absolve the soldier if he has to die. Our onlooker is told that that is Ambroise Paré, in the sixteenth century, teaching men for the first time to tie up an artery. Then that modern Parisian workman realizes that once there was a time when a man badly hurt in a fight or an accident bled to death surely, and he thinks that things are better now, and in a vague way he remembers Ambroise Paré, not as a name perhaps, but as the bearded man in black trunk hose, working among armored soldiers of long ago. And so whichever way he turns he sees on the walls the figures and the stories of those who have helped him in the past and have urged progress.

The artist is teaching the lesson of intellectual development; teaching it with brush and chisel to the child who has not yet learned to read and the peasant who is too old to learn. Wise and ignorant alike can study the great picture-book and see how seven hundred years ago the monk Abelard taught Frenchmen to think for themselves; how Louis, the king, learned to obey that he might learn to command; how Richelieu gave a great college to the people; how Cuvier and Buffon revealed the animals to man; how Papin and Lavoisier made fire and steam obey them and poisons turn to healing drugs.

So he is taught of the benefactors of France, and when he next sees it he understands the great in-

scription in letters of gold upon the pediment of the Panthéon: "A grateful country to its great men."

It is a common thing to say: "How intelligent the French workman is; how he understands pictures!" But a great deal of this quickness comes from the fact that he has been learning from them all his life. And if this is good for the uneducated Frenchman, it is good, too, for the uneducated Irishman, German, Swede, Italian, who may stroll into some new city hall in our own country. This is the strongest appeal which can be made for public and municipal art, that it is a public and municipal educator.

II

In writing a series of chapters upon decorative art as applied to public buildings, the first difficulty which I experience is that of making subdivisions of my subject which shall be in any way independent of each other.

Mr. Cox, in his illuminating lectures, has treated the classic spirit in art, and has devoted chapters to subject, drawing, color, modelling, etc. His general subject, running through all his book, is, as I understand it, the classic spirit and its influence upon the art of to-day, positive or potential. *My* subject will be the same reversed, that is to say, the Modern Tendency in Art as Influenced by the Spirit of the

Past. Under it will naturally fall the same subdivisions of composition, drawing, color, and subject, which last may also be called significance in decorative work. These latter qualities are to some extent separable, but there are other subjects which I wish to discuss and find practically inseparable. Such, for instance, are Catholicity of Thought, that is to say, a fair-minded consideration of the relations of ourselves and our methods to the personalities and methods of other people; the necessity for harmony between architect, sculptor, and painter; the necessity for experience as well as talent in the decorative artist.

Between such subjects there is constant interplay; catholicity can hardly be bred save by experience, which in turn is absolutely essential to harmony; so that the discussions of each chapter will to a certain extent echo or foreshadow those which go before or come after.

The creation of a great building, with its scale, proportions, distribution, and decoration—all of which qualities have the most intimate association with art—is a prodigious achievement. Its authors may learn from the whole field of endeavor of the past, and the greater their knowledge of bygone experience, the better their own experience is likely to be; the more needs they have seen served, the more needs they will be able to meet.

And yet there are restless souls to-day who cry

constantly for what they call originality, not only in relation to new needs, which is reasonable, but in relation to *all* old art, which is parricidal; and who would have us disinherit ourselves. Catholicity is the last thing they wish to entertain. But study of our legacy from the past shows us at once what various needs have been met and what a lesson may be learned from it. Throughout the following chapters the results of such study upon our modern practice, the effect, in sum, of tradition, will appear. It is perhaps well to begin by touching for a moment upon four or five of the principal phases of art evolution which have gone to the shaping of that tradition.

Our earliest masters in decoration, the Egyptians and Greeks, had a cloudless sky, and in their art they suited themselves to this condition with consummate skill. The cathedral-builders of northern Europe more than a thousand years later had gray skies and dark rainy seasons, and they turned their churches into great stone cages and filled the huge openings with translucent color of glass. The churches of the Romanesque period in Italy and southern France, which geographically and climatically were half-way stations between Greece and the land of the northern Gothic, were intermediate also as to decoration, combining stained glass with a predominance of polychromatic painting.

Here and to-day we may learn from all this past with its widely spaced periods. Our country is one of bright skies, but there is a time in our rainy eastern winters when stained glass is none too brilliant for us; while in southern California and Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, the decorator of the future will remember the exterior polychromy of Greece and Egypt with infinite advantage.

Once you are confronted *in situ* with the physical conditions of such countries, you learn a whole lesson almost in a moment. One does not forget one's first Egyptian temple; mine was Denderah. As our procession of donkey riders filed along the dikes between the fields that led toward it from the Nile, we saw what seemed a little whitewashed stone hut in which workmen might lay away their tools. After a mile or two it grew into one of the mightiest temples of the world, but the blazing sun of Egypt had so swallowed up all modelling that from far off it looked like a lump of chalk, for its antique exterior coating of color had disappeared, rubbed away by the flying sand of two thousand years and the occasional, though very rare, rain-showers. In Egypt the noonday sky is a huge blotter—it drinks up all modelling; but at evening marvellous color streams back again with the lengthening shadows. The Egyptians understood these conditions perfectly. They knew that sculpture in the round, placed out of doors, must be colossal in order to

present shadows big enough to be seen, for Ra, the sun-god, was pitiless to anything puny; and in decorating a wall for the open air they not only cut their figures in relief and painted them in strong colors, but often incised a deep line around the entire figure to stop out reflections and force the definition as far as they possibly could. To meet one of these reliefs indoors in a museum is to be surprised; to see it under the sun of Luxor or Kom Ombos is to understand in a moment the decorator's point of view.

In the British Museum, even in the Acropolis Museum of Athens, when, if you look at the Panathenaic frieze, you think, "What a pity to have daubed those wonderful young men and maidens with paint," you are seeing like a modern. But when you stand on the steps of the Parthenon and look upward to the place where the procession of riders and vase-carriers once marched along in marble, you begin to see more like an old Greek. Some remnants of relief-work are still up there, and the yellow blaze of reflected color from the pavement eats away every bit of their modelling. Now you know that the blue background was needed to enable you to make out the horses at all with their prancing legs. The old Greek, you may be sure, put on the strongest colors and even metal where he could, in bit and sword-hilt and spear-head; you understand now why he did it—and you have learned a lesson in decoration.

How the schemes of color may have been originally planned in Greece and Egypt, and how much subtility, or what we call tone, they had, is hard to say—perhaps it is impossible. I have examined much color and remain doubtful; pigment has subsisted variously in various places. At Abydos yellow has most resisted time; at Dayr el Bahree red. At Philae in the ceilings and capitals there is a really exquisite succession of greens, blues, and whites, but in each case on further examination I have found traces of color now faded, which when fresh would have gone far toward what with our modern ideas we should consider a coarsening of the effect. The fact is that the Greek or Egyptian could afford to be violent with his exterior coloring, for right at his elbow was always the sun-god with his prodigious capacity for glazing and harmonizing everything in nature.

When all is said, however, it is doubtful whether the decorators of Greece and Egypt were as subtly rich in their coloration as those later Greeks whom we name Byzantine, who came after Alexander the Great had opened the East, and who could thereby have in them more of what we call the Oriental feeling. The Roman Empire made great use of natural stones, adored marbles, and quarried them at the ends of the earth. Splendid as they were, they were not quite so solemnly gorgeous as the wonderful glass pastes which Byzantines compounded with their chemistry, rolled into sheets, cut up into little

cubes, and spread as a glorious surface for you and me to learn from still, upon the walls and vaultings of Constantinople, Ravenna and Palermo, Cefalù and Venice.

The men of the Middle Ages, Giotto and the rest, were more modest with their paint-box than Byzantine or Roman, and went back to plain water-color upon plaster. These story tellers—for the story, so despised nowadays, was what they sought first and last—have left in this same unpretending water-color of the fourteenth century some of the simplest yet completest and noblest decorations that have ever been painted, fruitful in lessons for us to-day.

As for the general lesson, indeed, we have now run the gamut. What came after the fourteenth century was, with one important exception, a recasting of older methods by which we are still profiting. The Renaissance used the bronze and marble of Roman decoration, the mosaic of the Byzantines, and the water-color of the Middle Ages, adding the one important factor of oil-painting. How much oil-painting was independent, how much it was based on tempera, and just when it became pure oil-painting we do not know, perhaps never shall. The question is very near to being the most interesting one before thé investigator of methods to-day.

Incidentally in the fifteenth century Italian artists studied anatomy and perspective. These we

EDWIN H. BLASHFIELD: Decoration for dome crown of Wisconsin State Capitol, in process, with unpainted spaces left for goring, and with duplicate figures reserved as alternatives in application of canvas (below are figures of the executants, showing scale).

need not discuss, save to note that the painters fell so much in love with the new sciences as to force too much modelling into their frescoes, and thereby so confuse them that a process of elimination under the hands of Michelangelo, Raphael, or Titian, became necessary before decoration could be broadened sufficiently to fill its fullest scope of excellence. There we have it, then, to look back upon and study, the Greek and Egyptian understanding of conditions applicable to out-and-in-door polychromy, the metals and marbles of the Romans, the mosaic and glass of the Byzantines and the Middle Ages, the water-color and tempera of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the oil-painting of the sixteenth century, the revived classicism of a while ago, the romanticism of yesterday, and the impressionism of to-day. What have *we* done with it? What are we doing? What are we going to do?

III

To emphasize the importance of that which we call the decoration of public buildings will be the burden of what I have to say first in these chapters. Next will come the study of the conditions which are most favorable or unfavorable to our young students taking an active part in this decoration; for in the hands of the rising generation of artists lies the future of American art.

The decoration of public buildings is the most important question in the consideration of that same art of the future, just as it always *has* been in the past of any and every national art from the time of the pyramid-builders down. Indeed, it passes far beyond the question of art to the questions of morals and patriotism and general culture. The temples, the cathedrals, the town halls have been the arch-schoolmasters of the ages. Eons and eons of years went to the preparation of these great teachers of mankind, for the first pupils were pupils of nature: and the aboriginal men who were the original artists had first to evolve their schoolmasters, then in turn to be developed by them.

When man in his primeval childhood lost his tail but kept his curiosity and his imitativeness, he began to scratch or whittle with a flint upon a bone or a stone doubtful semblances of things he saw about him. He commenced as an individualist; he scooped up the colored earths from the edges of the puddles, or the juice of crushed berries, and painted them upon his *own* body, or smeared the colors onto the walls of his *own* cave.

After long, long steps—so long that they are inconceivable to us, so long that all the time which has elapsed from the rigging of the first rude sail on a prehistoric dugout down to the latest turbine-motored sea-going monster is but short as compared with the evolution of one from another of human-

ity's primitive contrivings—the arts began to grow a little. Man learned to weave fibre into some sort of a stuff, to form clay into some sort of a vessel, and as he was afraid of a mysterious deity, who could hurt him with wind or rain or blast him with lightning, he honored that same deity not only with the fruit of his spear and club, but with the work of his hands in weaving and modelling. And so the prehistoric man from an individualist became to a certain extent a collectivist, and the arts entered the service of the public.

As they grew, and as metal-working was better understood, and glass was invented, and textiles were improved, in what we call the antique world, the world of the people who lived about the basin of the Mediterranean, life, in spite of its hardness and cruelty, grew very beautiful in some respects; and of all that life, covering thousands of years of time, thousands of square miles of space, almost the only message that has come down to us is the message of the graphic arts. The great sister art of poetry sounded as loud a note of celebration, but a very large part of what we know about the peoples of early antiquity comes from the work which they created with their hands to please their minds through their eyes.

And the very flower of this creation went to the buildings which sheltered the priest and the king and represented law and majesty, sacred and profane.

However beautiful the little statuettes, the figurines and vases of daily Greek life might be, the greatest works went to the temple, and it was of the colossal statue at Olympia that the contemporaneous historian wrote: "No Greek can be accounted truly fortunate who has not seen the Zeus of Phidias." As art penetrated the north, the same conditions governed; the glass which with its colors helped to make the tables of Greeks and Egyptians gay, grew into solemnity in the basilica's mosaics, and into splendor in the windows of the cathedrals.

The names of the public buildings are the century-marks of the ages. Just as King Edward raised a stone cross wherever the body of Eleanor was laid down on its progress to Westminster, so wherever the footprints of the spirit of civilization have rested most firmly some milestone of human progress has risen to be called Parthenon or Notre Dame, Giotto's Tower or Louvre, and to teach from within and without, by proportion and scale, by picture and statue, the history of the people who build it; to celebrate patriotism, inculcate morals, and to stand as the visible concrete symbol of high endeavor—the effort of man in his own handiwork to prove himself worthy of the Creator whose handiwork he is.

IV

Why, then, if the very names of these monuments attest their importance, further support the attestation? It is because, while the average intelligent American will admit what I have just said, he will forget all about it the moment he is confronted by his concrete problem in this field and by what he calls the necessities of the situation.

And what are the necessities of a situation? To instance them let us take some famous town hall as the most representative of possible buildings—say the town hall of Brussels, and in it a room which may be the *salle des mariages*. Now, in a perfectly plain, plastered room, costing very little money, you could marry just as many people a day and shelter them just as well from rain, heat, and cold as in a room made charming with decorations, and in a building famous forever by its Gothic loveliness.

But is there not something to be said for this latter quality? The man in the street may reply: "After all, it is no wonder that your town halls of Belgium, your merchants' exchange of Perugia, your people's palaces of Siena and Florence were famous for their art. They had nothing but their art to boast of. We to-day could not for a moment tolerate their inconvenience, their lack of telephones and heat and elevators; and in the interests of business

to-day we demand something better. We propose for ourselves infinitely greater convenience of every kind, and shall concentrate ourselves upon that."

And why? If you are already masters of the situation as regards convenience, and if at the same time you realize that qualities for which you have relatively little aptitude, decorative qualities, have made those old public buildings famous through all time, why, I ask it again with emphasis, do you not give serious thought to your weak points as well as to your strong ones?

Do you say that you neglect the artistic side of the question because the time for it is gone and past, and that we as a people are fitted only for the practical? Such a statement may be emphatically denied. American art, on the contrary, is advancing rapidly. The landscape and portrait schools are fully abreast of anything immediately modern, and the school of decorative painting is following closely after the other two.

It is seriousness of purpose that is lacking, not capacity for attacking the decorative problem. If once this seriousness can obtain, if once the public can be convinced of the prodigious importance of *good* decoration of the municipal, State, and national buildings, all the rest will follow as surely as noon follows morning, for there is plenty of capacity in America—it only needs to be developed.

It can be developed only by experience, and by

experience along special lines. This fact we must grasp firmly, and accept absolutely; otherwise we shall stumble along, delaying our opportunity, and expending our effort, our money, and our most precious time unwisely.

It is quite true that at the first blush this advocacy of the importance of good decoration applied to public buildings seems in itself unimportant, because the public appears quite ready to grant everything—but it is only an *appearance*. The auditor replies to the speaker: "Of course, we recognize the importance of decoration of public buildings. Of course, we realize that the temples and palaces and cathedrals shine in the past like beacons, and will project their light beyond us into no one knows how remote a future. Of course, we feel that Phidias and Michelangelo and Titian are names to conjure with." This the objector representing the public will say readily, and easily, and perfunctorily, having become accustomed to say it through centuries. But having glibly stated this recognition and realization of the greatness of the example of the past, he only too often cancels his words by the indifference of his attitude.

Frequently the citizen, who is to be part owner of the new State capitol or court-house, having spoken trippingly of its importance as a factor for good, turns the whole matter over to a special committee, then thinks no more of it at all, save perhaps to boast

now and then in an open letter to the press of how fine the new court-house or State house is going to be, and how much bigger and better than the one over the river in an adjoining State.

And all this in spite of the fact that he is a *good* citizen, honestly proud of the development of his State, that the committeeman is a capable committeeman, prudent and eager for the welfare of the commonwealth. It is all because, when the matter in hand relates to what we call art, they do not consider—they *will* not consider. Art, they think, relates to feeling, and *they*, the citizens, the committeemen, many of them at least, *most* of them as yet, I fear, believe that every man has a divine right to settle for himself any question which relates chiefly to feeling. They reiterate the worn phrase, "I know what I like," and they sit content while the real beauty-lover mourns.

Fortunately, the real beauty-lover is adding to himself many recruits from the ranks of the said citizens and committeemen. To every one of these we appeal, and with their aid we shall win, for beauty put into concrete form can work wonders, and in the end convinces. When the artist is dead and can paint no longer he begins to earn great sums for the inheritors of his work. When the Greek temple has become the product of a vanished civilization and unreproducible, we go thousands of leagues to visit it. When we have recognized that the fresco is the

Placing the figures in a decoration

Trying scale with a paper model

outcome of an age and a spirit which have departed, and that we cannot order its counterpart into being, we saw it from the wall and transfer it with infinite care to canvas, and buy it at a great price for our museums.

And so we recognize the past, and forget that the present is the past of to-morrow and is worth providing for. To-day's recognition of the art of the *past* is phenomenal. So far as we know, such a condition of things has obtained only once before. It began when Mummius, fresh from the sack of Corinth, brought back to Rome chariot-loads of Greek statues and paintings, battered at first by rough handling, but finally paid for with enormous sums, as the philhellenism of the Mæcenases under the Julians and Flavians and Antonines spread from Rome to the Rhine and Britain and covered Italy, Gaul, and Spain with their palace museums and villa museums, which they filled with objects big and little, either inherited or imitated from the art of Greeks or Egyptians, foreigners and predecessors. To-day the researches of the Morellis and Bodes and Berensons rival the antiquarian interests of a Hadrian, even though they may not call archaistic cities into being by imperial fiat; and the amazing collections of a group of American art-lovers recall what Friedländer tells us of the heaping up of artistic riches by the senatorial families of ancient Rome, and leave far behind the treasures gathered by such famous

moderns as Fouquet and Jabach. Fortunes are expended upon our collections, public and private. The soil of Eastern countries is literally sifted in sieves (I have seen it done) for the yield of tiny objects which go into Western museums. The castles of Britain and the Continent prove expugnable as the family portraits pass outward to the dealer; and the princes of the past seem to have bred and fought in a measure for the benefit of the modern collector, while the imitation of old pictures and treasure of all sorts has become so subtle that the counterfeit can be detected by only the cleverest of museum directors, and sometimes will no more down than will Banquo's ghost.

Great diligence, great intelligence, and great generosity are being accorded to the collection and distribution of the art of the past. Great sums of money, great rivalry, and great good-will are given to the collection even of contemporaneous painting and sculpture. It seems as if in modern art only that which goes to the decoration of the public building has been (in certain cases at least) lightly considered, and such art should be to every one the most important in the entire modern field.

Public and municipal art is a public and municipal educator. The decoration of temples and cathedrals and town halls has naturally taught patriotism, morals, æsthetics, in a far larger sense than has that of private palaces or houses, admirable as the latter has

often been. The passion for collection is, of course, the result of European precedent; but the American who, even making allowance for the fashion of a moment, can enter so passionately into rivalry for the possession of masterpieces of the past, will inevitably advance in perceptiveness as general culture grows. Intrinsic weight will establish itself against the glamour of celebrity (for it must be admitted that, like other amateurs, our collector sometimes buys a great name on a poor picture, instead of a better canvas with a less famous signature), and in time he who patronized the best art of the past so well will almost insensibly go on to acquiring the best art of his day. When he does, it is for the art students of the rising generation to see to it that some of the best contemporaneous art is in America.

It is true that in our American art, which is being developed, mural painting is a late comer, but it is a late comer because of all the branches of art it has become the most complicated in its organization. And although it is recent with *us*, it is a notable fact that it is older than history—is, indeed, the oldest of the arts. To try to place one branch of art above another would be to waste time in the attempt to sustain an untenable proposition. Decorative painting, portrait-painting, landscape-painting, are the peers of each other, and attain exchangeable headship in accord with the temperament and preference of those who practise and those who admire. Yet it is

undeniable that, of the three, decorative painting is the oldest and the most inclusive. Within the last twenty years there has arisen a wide-spread interest in it, and it has been celebrated generously, and praised for being what it really is — one of the highest forms of artistic expression. Nevertheless, there are still many art-lovers, and even some artists, who think of decoration as of something comparatively easy to do, the occupation of the man who is not quite big enough to depend wholly upon his own personality, but who backs himself by the resources of architecture, and hides his poverty or weakness of expression behind a screen of ornament. There was never a greater fallacy than that which attributes an even relatively weak personality to the successful decorator, as I shall hope to demonstrate by future argument. Because decoration is applied to spoon-handles as well as to towers and domes, the superficial often catalogue it hastily as a minor art, forgetting that in being so inclusive it must also be enormously exacting.

The public has not yet wholly outgrown certain antiquated notions. Fifty years ago the "fresco-painter," who was invariably an Italian or a German, lived and worked in the vestibule between the "storm door" and the "front door." Sculpture at the same epoch—all this was in the days of what Mr. Henry James called mediæval New York—dwelt in a tray upon the head of a vendor, also an Italian. The tray

contained plaster lambs and busts of Washington and statuettes of the "Little Samuel Woke" variety, and it did not go up the "stoop" to the Mæcenas of the moment. It went down the steps to the area, and had to give the countersign to Bridget before it met the eyes of her mistress. In one of John Leech's pictures, a flunky, with calves appropriate to his position, stands upon the steps barring the way, and says to the vendor, who holds out a plaster Apollo Belvedere: "Yes, I dessay it's all very fine, but it's not *my* idea of a figger." Just so, many laymen, and as I have noted before, even some artists, still say: "Yes, decoration is all very fine," but make the mental reservation: "It's not my idea of art; it has neither frame nor shadow-box, and it does not figure in a catalogue."

In the main, however, decoration has met with a most generous recognition on the part of both artists and public, and it deserves it; for, I repeat, it is the oldest, the most inclusive, and the most exacting of the arts. It began with the cave-dweller hacking bone into rude suggestion of men and animals, or scratching outlines upon the rock; it developed into beauty applied to utility, and it culminated as a supreme teacher, through the arts, of patriotism, morals, and history, in temples and cathedrals and town halls. The greatest artists who ever lived have been the acolytes of this ministrant decoration—Phidias, Donatello, Michelangelo, Raphael,

Leonardo, Correggio, Veronese, Rubens, to name only a few of them, were decorator-painters and decorator-sculptors.

It was in directing the sculptural ensemble of the Parthenon, in building up the great altar of Padua, in carrying the painting from the domes down the pendentives and walls of Parma, in composing the many consecutive or concentric ceiling panels of Venice, in covering and making glorious the barn-like nakedness of the plastering to the Sistine Chapel, that these protagonists of art attained to some of their highest flights. They showed that man moving easily under the restraint of limitation, and bending the conventionalism of decoration to the expression of his purpose, can manifest as much of power as man moving freely. Design, one of the very highest and most exacting elements of art, must be ever present in decoration, and, above all, the history of decoration demonstrates that not even the most brilliant executant can lastingly succeed in it unless he possess that power of *tension* which is given only to the healthy in the arts, as elsewhere in nature.

The greatest of artists, then, have been decorators, and a high development of the special branches of decorative painting and sculpture has been coincidental with the periods during which the most famous schools of art have flourished. Holland furnishes the only exception, and even her exception is a

EDWIN H. BLASHFIELD: In Lantern Crown, Library of Congress

EDWIN H. BLASHFIELD: Trying scale of figures for Wisconsin dome

qualified one. Her rejection of the doctrines and forms of the mother church, the arch-patron, greatly curtailed the output of monumental painting in general; and the Dutchman was by nature a realist *pur sang*. One man, their greatest, Rembrandt, was filled with the decorative sense, a composer of loveliest and also grandest patterns of light and shade. But it was just when he created his almost magical picture, the so-called "Night Watch," that his fellow-citizens began to misunderstand his art, and to neglect him; and according to his biographer, M. Michel, the canvas which he frankly undertook as a decorative commission was not a success in the eyes of his contemporaries, and was not preserved in its entirety. Nevertheless, in many a composition of light and shade, Rembrandt shows as much feeling for decorative beauty and even grandeur of pattern as any man who ever lived.

V

Such various men of various times have vibrated to the appeal of decorative art that we may surely look for a response among our own people. The American spirit is sympathetic toward many things. More than a score of years ago I went to Washington with the first committee which made an attempt to obtain free importation of foreign art. We sat up nearly all night in the sleeping-car considering

ways and means; we agreed that we must not talk sentiment, we must talk economics, appeal to the practical American mind of our legislators, and show them that good art is financially desirable. But when we reached the Capitol we found that it was precisely sentiment which appealed to senator and representative alike. They patted us on the back, and said: "It is fine to find you young fellows [mind you this was more than a quarter of a century ago] asking *not* to be protected." Thus, you see, sentiment does reach the American legislator. And for those who wish to hear the other side, we may prove easily enough that good national art is a good national asset.

To begin with, art confers immortality. A noble artistic representation immortalizes the cause symbolized, the thought embodied, the individual portrayed. "The bust outlasts the throne, the coin Tiberius," is not merely the fine phrase of a poet. For about the concrete representation crystallizes and remains the thought. Not all Thucydides impresses the mind of the average man as swiftly and forcibly as does his first vision of the Acropolis. Toward the monument which stands for cherished cause or inspired idea or revered individual the mind turns in instinctive patriotism, and if in the monument you find commemoration plus beauty, the latter quality gilds the halo of pre-eminence, and even outlasts it, since men's memories may fade but their power for

visual receptiveness is constant. The votaries at the shrine of patriotism become the visitors to the temple of beauty, and that beauty holds with it still and always some memory of the good and great who are celebrated by its outward forms.

If you think I am becoming too poetical, remember that these visiting pilgrims bring throughout the ages, in wallet or toga, bosom or breeches pocket, obolus and denarius and dollar, which go into the market to keep things stirring. Let us pass from the waxed tablets of the guardians of Athene's temple to the ledgers of the bookkeepers of a modern hotel, and take the little city of Perugia in Italy as an example.

Forty years ago it was quiet indeed. To-day you have big hotels and ultra-modern trolley-cars which pull straight up the hill in twelve minutes the travellers who used to lumber around long curves in an antiquated bus. Do you say that the old way was the more picturesque? Perhaps I agree with you, but we are talking now about the financial advantages of good art. The clean hotels are at least an unmixed blessing; and who gave them, who made the town cleaner and more prosperous than it had been for four hundred years? The hotel-keepers whose money has come from the visitors to the famous frescoes in the *Sala del Cambio*, the Hall of the Exchange, and to the sculptures of the great fountain on the square. The prosperity of Perugia

has come straight off the palette of Perugino, and the marble dust from the chisel of Giovanni Pisano has turned to gold dust and coin. Has any Fouquet or Colbert, any minister of finance in France greatly excelled our lady, the Venus of Milo, as a bringer of revenue? Imagine the sums which have been paid for casts, engravings, photographs, printed books and pamphlets about her goddesship, and add to these the money given to steamer, railway, and hotel by those to whom her presence in Paris was one of the most powerful magnets which drew them thither. And as is Paris, so are other capitals; and as is Perugia, so are fifty other Italian towns; and as they are, so are Washington, Boston, and St. Paul beginning to be. Ask the doorkeepers of the Library of Congress, the Public Library of Boston, the State Capitol of St. Paul, how many visitors pour into their buildings on holidays, and even on week-days.

It is perhaps a low plane, this of the consideration of the money value to hotel-keeper and shopman and railway of the visiting tourist; but its corollary is upon a higher plane, and is a better support to our contention which is for the stimulus and education returned to that same visitor as a thousandfold the equivalent of his money. If the chronicles of France, and Germany, and Italy inspire the citizens of those lands to patriotism, the eyes of the citizens—and, through their eyes, their hearts and minds—are even more quickly caught by the sculptured or painted

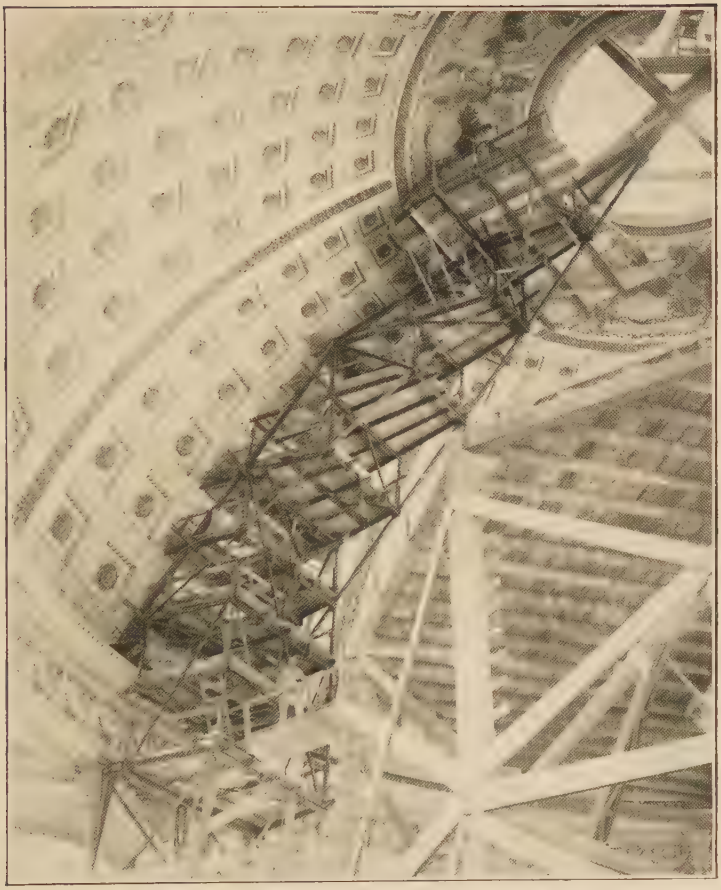
figures of the *heroes* of the chronicles. The Frenchman who hears the word Austerlitz sees before his mental vision the little man in the gray overcoat and three-cornered hat, the Napoleon of Raffet or Charlet. The descendants of the soldiers of the great Frederick see *Alter Fritz* in powder and pigtail in the pictures of Menzel. We Americans know Lincoln in the sculpture of St. Gaudens or French, or Washington as Houdon and Stuart saw him; even the theatrically improbable Washington crossing the Delaware is not without his uses to those who meet him in Leutze's picture.

Minor men are immortalized if the muse of the sculptor's art lay her hand upon their shoulder. Gattamelata and Colleone were after all only hired captains, though among the best of the generals of the Italian Renaissance. They would have been forgotten fifty times over had they been emphasized by nothing beyond their personal worth, but to-day their names are known to the cultured of every country, their physical presentment to the artists of every land, because four hundred years ago they were horsed and harnessed by great sculptors and set on high as unfading memories.

As you walk the streets of Paris to-day among hurrying men and women, at every thousand feet or so there crosses your path the shadow of a figure which is not hurrying but still, and which is above you—pedestalled! You look up and add to the

picture which has passed before your eyes and through your mind, of sculptured or painted monitors, martyrs to principle, or defenders of the land—men who have fought with hands and head for their country; who have printed books and burned at the stake for the principles which those books enunciated; who have struggled to save the commonwealth, and died under the guillotine for their service; who have taught the blind, or led the keenest-sighted; who have analyzed, painted, written, manufactured —who, in a word, have helped in the past and today, thanks to art, are still helping every thoughtful on-looker.

Assuredly, then, the importance of art, which is the subject, in its widest sense, of this chapter, has always been demonstrated by our reason, our emotions, even our instincts. As aboriginal savages we instinctively decorated our bodies. Childhood in the race resembles the childhood of the individual human animal, which loves bright-colored objects of any kind, and this primeval impulse to decorate ourselves is so mighty that it has proved one of the bases of commerce throughout the ages. Man himself has been first subject of his own arts, and woman, probably as docile to receive, has been even more lastingly subjective. A delightful prototype is Anatole France's girl in "L'Ile des Pingouins," a book in which the aboriginal inhabitants of the island go about in artless nakedness. Captured running upon



Travelling scaffold used at the Library of Congress

the beach, the girl is dressed by the progressive saint, who has brought silks and satins to the Pingouins. At first she struggles like a snared wild beast, then as the gown begins to work its spell, and as the saint commences to lace her up, she looks over her shoulder and, critically surveying her waist, says: "You may pull it in a little tighter still."

With the peoples of antiquity, particularly of Greek antiquity, it was something the same as with Anatole France's girl. They were natural beauty-lovers and they wanted to make beauty a part of everything! Athens, even while she held the headship of the antique world, spent more money upon her art than upon her wars; and when it came to taxing the people to pay for Athene's peplos—to a question of beauty and art, in short—the Athenian taxpayer said, like the Penguin girl: "You may squeeze me a little tighter still." They loved the arts so ardently, the ancients, that they made the features of their beloved immortal.

> "The face that launched a thousand ships
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilion"

is still the prototype of imperishable loveliness, and this earliest sung of beauties was potential after more than two thousand years to kindle poetic fire in an Elizabethan age, second only, if second at all, in brightness to that of Homeric times.

If instinct impelled man toward the arts, our reason and our emotions, hand in hand, lengthened and strengthened the chain of masterpieces. Sometimes, as in the Parthenon, reason shone brightest; again, at Karnak or in the cathedrals emotion beckoned us more compellingly into the mystery of the groves of stone and the jewelled light. But always in the past, whether exerting its force emotionally or rationally, art was a mighty power; and to-day, in spite of our diversion toward the path of her sister, science, we shall find, if we try to retrace it in thought and study, that the roadway which leads down to us from Attic Athens or Tuscan Florence may be followed step by step. It is less clearly marked here and there, but it is continuous; in the long chain not one link is broken. Art is a Jacob's ladder of angels. The masters, the Michelangelos and Rembrandts and Velasquezes, come down to us in a glory so great that they dazzle us a bit, then go up again into heaven, where they belong; but we may, any of us, crowd about the foot of the ladder and look through the crevices of the clouds till at least a little of the radiance comes out and warms us. And if we look with honest eyes, devoid of affectation or insincerity, we may see many things, and may fall in love, each of us in his own fashion. One of us may love the broad mastery of Greek modelling, another the delicacy of the Florentine primitives. Velasquez's flat gray planes or Titian's winy reds and

tawny browns are there for whoever chooses them; and one may pass from the nervous, vigorous, assured breadth of Frans Hals to the quiet, smooth, assured breadth of a Van Eyck interior. We may stand ringed around by miracles, all different, yet each in its way a well-nigh perfect example of the art of the past, and learn from it to practise the art of the present, which, as *our* art, to-morrow again will become that of the past.

All these things I have said before, and shall say again and again, for the public consciousness, sensitive to many things, is dull to others; and if I had to raise a statue to the typical promoter, whether of matters spiritual or material, I would make him a god Thor, and gird him with his weapon to hammer, hammer, hammer, again and again in the same place.

And he would be no serene god, no deified Harmonious Blacksmith, but a striker of discords. First, and longest, and hardest, he would smite in beating out from the amorphousness of our indifference a conviction—the conviction of the importance of public art—that it should be at least as good as the very best, because placed the most conspicuously, and therefore of all art that most likely to impress and teach the people.

Next, he would have to strike long and hard in emphasis of the importance of harmony, the mutuality of architect, sculptor, and painter in any decorative undertaking, to strike until he had welded the

three into one ingot and fashioned from it a weapon ten times as tempered to its purpose as it ever could have been in the personality of any one of these artists divided from their trinity. Divided, the architect, sculptor, and painter, however sincere, would hinder each other in the production of a great building; united, they are all-powerful. The Thor's hammer has turned the ingot into a battering ram which can level everything that interferes with the desired result.

The next thing to be placed on the anvil should be fashioned into a symbol of the importance of experience in the decorative artist, not the mural painter alone, for I am no longer separating him from architect and painter, but the decorative artist, architect, sculptor, or painter.

Talent is common to all real artists, and to no artist is all-round talent and culture more needful than to the decorator; but upon one side, and that a very widely embracing and very exacting one, the decorator is perforce a specialist. Experience, reiterated and hard-bought experience, is absolutely necessary to him, and in no wise is the lengthening repetition of hammer strokes more typical than it is of this continuity of effort, this long succession, now of essay, now of blunder, now of half success, fusing at last into a harmonious result, triumphant and perfect.

If our Thor has driven deeply into the public

mind the conviction of these three things: that public art shall be of the best, that there shall be harmony between architect, sculptor, and painter, and that not only talent but past experience shall be demanded from all three, the rest is a matter of detail.

II

HARMONY BETWEEN BUILDING COMMISSIONER AND ARCHITECT

II

HARMONY BETWEEN BUILDING COMMISSIONER AND ARCHITECT

I

We have seen that the intrinsic importance of decoration has been attested completely and lastingly in a line of world-famous buildings reaching from Egypt and Greece eastward across Asia and westward over Europe, and binding the age of the pyramid-builders to our own by an unbroken chain. If we consider its importance in our own times, and discuss the relation of decoration in general and decorative painting in particular to our modern needs and practices, we soon realize that, although the importance of good decoration is patent throughout history, the eyes of the average man to-day are not open to it—above all, are not open to the fact that it can exist only through harmony between those who create it, and that this harmony must be bought at the price of experience, good-will, and money.

It is difficult to divide a consideration of decora-

tion into chapters, and especially in considering this same harmony, experience, and practice, for they are inextricably bound together. Experience and experiment, indeed, are like the children's game of laying hands one upon another, and making repeated withdrawals of the under hand to place it again on top of the pile. Experiment breeds experience, which must again draw upon experiment for further procedure in order to assure harmony in practice, and thus you have continuous interrelation and interdependence.

Consideration of harmony between the public, the architect, and the mural painter must, as far as may be in these chapters, cover the points which make it difficult, though possible, for the creators of the public building to be harmonious. The difficulties may be roughly divided into those relating to choice of creative and executive artists (through competition or appointment) to the misconceptions arising between the building commissioner and the architect, between the building commissioner and the mural painter, between the architect and the mural painter, between various mural painters working together.

To-day when we build a State capitol or a great court-house the enterprise is chronicled as an event; a deal of paper is covered with print to tell us that such and such a thing costs so much more or less

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Edwin A. Abbey. "Science Revealing the Treasures of the Earth." Decorative figures in the main rotunda of the State Capitol of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg

than was expected; that So-and-so, the expert, has expressed this, that, and the other view regarding the excellence of the result to be obtained, and that in a general way this palace of the people is to combine first-rate practicality with artistic magnificence of the highest order. We are led to understand, indeed we lead ourselves to understand, that our appreciation of the situation reaches the level of its intrinsic importance.

We are vastly mistaken. It does *not* attain that level. It is all well, or much of it well as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. Our architects are able, sincere, enthusiastic, and hard-working. They stand ready to serve us admirably; but we, the public, do not strengthen their hands as we should, because we do not appreciate the importance of what they create for us. It is of quite *transcendent* importance. The public buildings are the houses of the people, and whether cathedral, temple, courthouse, capitol, or city hall, these houses in the past have been landmarks of progress which have lasted as long as printed and written records. They have been beacons in history which have outlasted the splendor of the dynasties that lighted them. Each one of these buildings has been the house of God and of the people as well, for each has been raised to enshrine the workings of the law, to symbolize aspiration, to evidence outward beauty, to stand for the attributes of deity. Such a building

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is the very ark of the covenant, and its creation means such potentiality for instruction and edification that the man in the street has by no means fulfilled his duty in voting appropriations for its construction, and then turning his back upon it with little thought save a recommendation that there shall not be undue waste. For such a house there should be rather largess than economy; and it is pathetic that in a case where the very best of the best is needed, and may be made imperishable in stone and bronze and mosaic, to become a teacher for millennials, a concrete realization of beauty, the property of every man rich and poor—it is pathetic, it is deplorable indeed, that our first thought should be to recommend that it *shall not cost too much.*

If the economy suggested meant expenditure otherwise and better applied, the saving would be worth while. But few objects are as worthy, and why *not* spend lavishly on the creation of a public building? To begin with, it is yours and mine—we are expending upon our own; next, it is a place of pilgrimage for the visitor; its beauty will enhance our credit abroad as well as educate our children at home.

As was said in the last chapter, beauty is a tremendous commercial asset; yet when the ground and the stone and the steel have been paid for with millions, and the architect goes to the building commissioners for money, for his ornament, his sculpture, and

painting, and mosaic, and glass, how do they reply to him? He says: "To make this room as beautiful as I desire I must have twenty-five thousand dollars." They answer: "If you ask for such a sum as that, the legislature will not listen to you for a moment; we will propose ten thousand dollars; there has been waste in many directions; if you wish to get anything at all you must show them that you intend to practise economy—and here is our opportunity to practise it since *art* is a superfluity." In other words, the architect declares: "We need a room which shall be an example of beauty of the first order." The legislators reply: "Spend half the money, and make something as good as you can." And so the enterprise is crippled, and two hundred years later, perhaps, the visitor looks indifferently at a characterless room which might have become famous and been instructive through all that lapse of time had not the legislature been convinced that art was the one superfluity which offered opportunity for the cutting down of budgets.

"Before our cities are beautiful they must be clean" is used as a knock-down argument against him who asks money for embellishment. And what on earth has that to do with the question? Of course, our cities should be clean. What is there in cleanness that interferes with beauty, and why should the money which pays for cleaning be taken from that which pays for ornamenting? As well say: a

man should be honest before he is cultivated. Is culture any hindrance to honesty, and may a man not spend some money upon his intellectual cravings without picking his neighbor's pocket?

Enough is given for tawdry so-called ornament to pay for much real beauty, and upon this kind of ornament the average voter is apt to insist. Without it, he declares that the room looks bare and lacks the suggestion of comfort to which he is accustomed and entitled. But if you say to him, pay a man to *think*, to so formulate and distribute the ornament that it shall create beauty of a high order, the "practical" man objects: "You wish me to pay an expert? I have no money left for that; it has all gone to the experts whom we had to have, the men who laid our pipes and attended to our needs," and there is the whole argument begun again *ab ovo*. We need an expert to regulate an arrangement which enables us, for instance, to accomplish some particular business act in ten minutes instead of fifteen, but we do not need the beauty which has made the joy of centuries of past times. "Pay me fifty thousand dollars," says one man, "and I will contrive an improvement in the public service by which your advertisements shall reach twice as many people." "You shall have your fifty thousand at once as a public benefactor." "Give me fifty thousand dollars," says the architect, "and I will make your room beautiful." "Visionary!" replies the legislator;

From a photograph, copyright 1908, by Detroit Publishing Co.

JOHN W. ALEXANDER: "The Crowning of Pittsburg." The main panel in the Apotheosis of Pittsburg, Carnegie Institute

"can you not understand that this is the moment for economy?" And cannot the legislator understand that if we follow such reasoning, public art must be abolished, since there is and can be no end to the possibility of expenditure upon practical improvements? In the past the service of beauty was the service of God; have we progressed so far that the service of beauty is now the robbery of man? One would think so.

The tendency of the average modern individual is to assume the following attitude toward art: Art is a word applicable to things produced in the past, many of which exist still as purchasable commodities. If a man is rich enough he will do well to buy them. Their possession confers prestige. Indeed, some of them now command such enormous prices that to own one is almost as creditable as having a patent of nobility, and makes a man the successful rival of any of his fellows. He may, as it were, wear a surpassing Rembrandt in his collection, just as a woman outvies her friends in her own pearls and laces. If he be truly public-spirited he will put some of this art of the past upon show, will in a way lay it on the shelf of a museum, label and give it to the commonwealth.

Do not believe for a moment that I am speaking lightly of the collector; those collectors, who think and plan for our museums as well as for their private galleries, are our great and lasting benefactors, and I

believe that they in turn get some of their truest happiness from their art treasures. And it is small wonder that they should; for my part I can hardly imagine a keener pleasure than that of going into one's own sanctum, and there before one's own possession, looking into the clear exquisite depths of a panel painted by a great Flemish primitive master or some other work perfect of its kind. If I could own it I would wear such a possession in my cap, and in my heart at once, and would go down on my knees before it in thanks to the goddess Fortune. Yes, the great collector is not only a benefactor but a happy man; and even the perfunctory collector who buys because it is the thing to do so, is perhaps by way (as the English put it) of becoming happy, for in time his pictures lure him onward to more and better appreciation. Said an American friend twenty years ago in Florence: "It doesn't do to look too much at these old Botticellis and Filippo Lippis, for if you *do*, don't you know, you get to like them."

And so it is not of the real collector that I speak, but of the average man who has not yet looked "too much at the old Botticellis," but enjoys his art vicariously and buys upon somebody else's appraisal. When he is made building commissioner, however, for the court or State house, being a good citizen and conscientious according to his lights, he remembers that art is a big word, and he takes cer-

tain respectful precautions. These go as far as having Mr. Blank, who is "artistic in his tastes," made a member of the commission; sometimes they go even further—so far, indeed, as to let a little consideration for beauty fall upon the proceedings wherever it may not cost too much or interfere with the realities of life and "the necessities of the situation."

And here I must apologize to the building commissioner, and state his side of the case. I am speaking of him now in his beginnings. He is confronted with something wholly new to him, and he underestimates it; but he is an intelligent man, and as the enterprise grows he grows with it. The power of such a situation for teaching is great, and I know of no more interesting process of education than that of the building commissioners of the Capitol in a certain great Western State. They began with doubt and suspicion, but, led by tact and wisdom on the part of their architect, and supported by their own intelligence and sincerity, they ended in enthusiastic realization of success deserved and achieved. I believe that their path is being followed by other commissioners, and usually much in the measure of the importance and therefore of the steadying effect of the enterprise.

We have, then, as our situation for discussion, the need in a special case for the creation of a fine public building. For material which is to bring about an

adequate meeting of the need, we have on one side the architect, sculptor, and painter, who may become the direct makers of the monument; on the other side, the public, for which the work is to be done; and as representing the public we have the building commissioners, who are to initiate the undertaking, choose the creative body, make provision for the enterprise, and finally approve it. The architect, sculptor, and painter are naturally eager and enthusiastic; also they are specially trained, and *their* attention is focalized first of all upon endowing the building with beauty of an appropriate character, although the architect will also control a staff of men expert as to practical needs. The building commissioners, too, are eager and enthusiastic; they are not specially trained as regards art, but their general experience is great, and it will naturally incline them in the direction of the practical side.

This is quite as it should be up to a certain point, but it is just beyond that point that the artist's trouble begins. The building commissioner knows much of the practical, little of the artistic, side. He should, therefore, study especially, and allow particularly for, the questions regarding which he is relatively ignorant. But usually the exact reverse obtains. He has under him artist experts and practical experts: on one side the men who control the scale, proportion, form, and color; on the other, those who plan the lighting, heating, plumbing, etc.

With the latter the building commissioner works sympathetically and understandingly, but when he comes to the artists, he selects the best men he knows of, and then with the honestest purpose sets them adrift. You say: "But is not this ideal—to be let alone with your thoughts?" The reply is: "It would be, if the embodiment of thoughts in stone and marble and color didn't have to be paid for. The building commissioner is by no means ungenerous, and he means to be just; but when he comes to the question of details in appropriations for art he is puzzled."

The elasticity of his estimates is a stock subject for joking between the artist and his client—by artist, I mean architect, painter, or sculptor. But this elasticity is inevitable unless the artist begins by overcharging his client sufficiently to leave himself a margin for unsuccessful experiment, for the artist's experiments are all made in process of the work, whereas the manufacturer's are concluded before the goods are ordered of him. You shrug your shoulders. I could prove my point to you a hundred times during the decoration of a great building, and I hope to convince you in a measure in the course of these chapters.

The building commissioner thoroughly understands the man who puts in the wires or the lighting, but the artist and he speak different languages. If he orders the tiling for a floor, the manufacturer,

after measuring the space, can tell him to a dollar what the material and the work will cost; but if it is a question of the coloring and general decoration of the walls and ceiling of the same room, and the best possible result is required, no human being can say just what it should cost, because this is a matter of feeling which may require repeated experiment. When McKim was decorating the University Club in New York, he did certain pieces of work over many times until the result satisfied him. McKim, besides being a great artist, had the resources of a long-established house behind him, but the young artist whose purse is not deep must curtail his experiment or suffer loss; and the client, unless he be a man of quite exceptional breadth of vision, will suspect what he cannot understand, and will watch the budget jealously. Sometimes, truly, the converse obtains, and the architect for artistic reasons wishes to use a cheaper marble than that proposed by the commissioners. This has happened more than once, and not a little to the surprise of the parties of the first part.

The members of our local committees and of our national committees are sincere—not a doubt of it—and the local patriotism which says, give us for our public building the local marble—*our* marble—as a sentiment is irreproachable; but if that marble once placed clashes with its surroundings and spoils the architect's music, not all the patriotism in

Hugo Ballin: Centre ceiling panel in a room of the State Capitol, Madison, Wis.

county, State or nation will completely deaden the shock which its presence brings in a dissonance of color to the trained eye, because that shock proceeds from the cultivation of another kind of sense, and arises, not only from feeling, but from knowledge—knowledge which it is the expert professional's business to use as a sword to parry the assault of the enthusiastic, if mistaken, local patriot. Or, if the contrary obtains, as I believe it does more often, if the exotic appeal of the white marble of Carrara, or the glitter of Algerian onyx, with its prestige of greater cost, moves even a taxpayers' committee, then from no one can come more gracefully than from the experts the suggestion, "Are not Abana and Pharpar waters of Damascus?"—the patriotic admonition to take for the public building the perhaps more harmonious marble which lies in the vein under the soil at that same public building's very foundations.

I wish I could bring this constant need of expert advice home to the intelligent, for in most cases it does not really reach them. They answer: "Yes, yes, you are right; united effort, wisely directed, is essential to harmony. You shall have a free hand." They say this and believe it. They are perfectly sincere, but the building rises, the reliefs and statues begin to take their place; mosaic and painted decoration begin to cover the walls. All at once some one, not an artist, has an idea—it may be a very

good idea, and assuredly sincere in its conception: "For utilitarian reasons we must enlarge such a room; for reasons of local patriotism we must change our columns or pilasters to a marble of quite another color (a color never contemplated by the designer); we desire to illustrate some point of local pride and the mural painter must introduce into his carefully composed arrangement this new thing." Straightway the building as an æsthetic conception totters, as it were, upon its base, and, unless you have authoritative dicta from the men who know, the men of new ideas will so prevail with the public that the beauty of the result will be seriously impaired, if not destroyed.

And after this beauty has been impaired, the public says: "Why did they bungle? They had an advisory committee of artists, who ought to have known better." But an advisory committee can only *advise*. It has no other power, and the rejection of advice upon one point may throw all the other parts out of harmony. It is true that afterthoughts must come, and must be acted upon in some way in all great enterprises. But the business of the building commission is to minimize at the start the number and importance of possible afterthoughts, and later to deal with them wisely.

In the first instance, lay directors and artist directors may confer with infinite advantage; in the second, wise interference is hardly possible save to

the professional artist. The lay director can always make it clear to the artist director that there must be seating room, say, for two hundred and fifty more people; that is a simple proposition, plain to any intelligent man. But the artist cannot always make it clear to the lay director *why* in enlarging the room he must do such and such a thing not to impair its beauty, cannot make the reason quite clear because it can be quite clear only to him who is trained in æsthetic relation and requirement.

Utilitarian requirements can, barring accident, be foreseen and planned on paper at the inception of the work to the satisfaction of the lay directors; requirements in the processes of scaling, coloring, modelling, *cannot* be wholly foreseen, but to a certain extent must be felt as they grow. Many a non-professional critic comes forward with a suggestion, excellent in itself, but utterly impossible of realization. Sometimes the thing suggested is better than the thing executed, but cannot be adopted. The theme may be even noble, yet ridiculous in possibility of juxtaposition. When Paul Veronese painted one of those great banquets, which are among his masterpieces, and in which was a figure of Christ sitting at meat with many people, he put a dog under the table, as was his frequent habit. One of his building committee thought a dog not good enough for the subject, and requested the artist to put in St. Mary Magdalen in its place, washing

the Christ's feet. The painter replied that there were compositional reasons which made it inconvenient to do so. We have no mural painters to-day in America as authoritative as Paul Veronese, and usually our building committees treat us very considerately, but embarrassing suggestions have been sometimes made.

In a way we have been generous even to lavishness, and at times we have spent money that might almost have built the Parthenon or Notre Dame of Paris. The evident reply is: "Yes, but this is not the age of Pericles, or of the mediæval masons' guilds; where should we look for an Ictinus or Phidias, or an Erwin von Steinbach?" The rejoinder is as evident: Pericles simply did the best he could in his time. His time happened to be one of the great epochs of art, but that has nothing to do with the principle. He put his enterprise into the best-trained hands that he could find, and gave to the ablest brain the conduct of that enterprise. With the designers and builders he associated himself, perhaps the most enlightened amateur of all time, but we may believe that he let discussion of important points come from the mouths of architect, painter, and sculptor, before decision came from his own.

For it is by *no* means the wish of the reasonable artist to-day to disfranchise the enlightened amateur. The enlightened amateur is invaluable; he helps to

clear up darkness in council; in a way his all-round cultivation may bring a wider sense of perfection than comes to the professional man. His love of all kinds of art may permeate discussion and consider many sides of a question, where the technician, forced to concentrate himself upon a point, may overlook other points of interest because they are without his focus. The non-professional may map out the course, he may even direct it in a general way, but at crucial times, at moments of emergency, safety will be more assured if the non-professional man keeps his hand off the wheel.

II

I have tried to note some of the difficulties which, even with the utmost good-will on both sides, may arise between the building commissioner and the artist in control of an enterprise, be he architect, mural painter, or sculptor. Let us pass on to the question of harmony between these three latter creators of the building, and begin by considering the importance of the artist-architect as director and controller.

If the great decorated building is such a mighty agent, if all civilized peoples have needed it, and produced it, we too need and must create it. We *have* created it, and we are acquiring it yearly in more and more of our cities. Do we ever reflect much

concerning such a creation? It is worth while, for the process may be illuminating. How has it begun?

Here in a new country, the sittings of the court of law have been held first under a tree. Then the school coeval with the church has been built—built perhaps before the court-house because the babies at a task of any kind need shelter more than the hardier "grown-ups." Next have come court and town meeting-house; then, as they wax numerous and prosperous, these children of older countries remember what their ancestors built across seas, and ask for something more enduring than pine planks and shingles, until at last those who would still keep the public purse-strings drawn are outvoted, and an appropriation of money is made. Here are the funds for the new State capitol. Now who shall build it? A knows a good man, and proposes him; so does B; so does C. But the other citizens say no, and the local papers say no still more emphatically. "We wish to offer the very widest opportunity for talent. There shall be no 'mute, inglorious Milton' here; if we have one, let him speak out in stone and mortar. Other States have built great capitols, ours must be as fine as any. We will have a *competition.*"

There is abundant fallacy in their contention that a competition necessarily offers the widest opportunity for talent, but the theory is democratic, and, after much discussion by those who are as nearly

Copyright by Robert Blum

ROBERT BLUM: Decoration in Mendelssohn Hall Clee Club, New York. Fragment

One of the pioneer mural paintings which helped importantly to further the movement

expert as practice can make them, no perfectly satisfactory equivalent for competition has yet been found.

This question of competitions is so important, so full of thorns, so far from having been solved, that a good deal of space must be given to even partial consideration of it.

III

The selection of the men who are to create the building, the architect who is to design it, the sculptors and painters who are to be responsible for its decoration, is evidently a matter of grave importance to the public.

The discussion of the method of selection is not likely to be entertaining to the reader, but the double facts—first, that what we call an open competition is the method usually preferred by the public and its representatives; secondly, that the artists nearly always dislike and disapprove of this method, make it desirable to state some of the conditions inseparable from an open competition, which render selection by the latter uncertain of result. In noting some of these difficulties, I emphasize especially those which confront the mural painter, because his specialty and needs are most familiar to me, but very nearly the same conditions apply to competition in architecture or sculpture.

The mainspring of the public desire for competition is the public wish for the best service, and the public belief (I think mistaken) that young and undiscovered talent will find its direct opportunity in open competition.

To put it more familiarly, the average layman says to himself, John Smith, of So-and-So; John Brown, of So-and-So, seem to us talented. How do we know that they are not more talented than any one in the field? On the other hand, how are they to show their talent save in an open competition? What opportunity is there for them if the important commissions in mural painting are given always to older men? Establish an open competition; John Smith and John Brown will gravitate to their proper places, and, finding their opportunity, two geniuses may manifest themselves.

It is possible to show that the event might prove, first, that John Smith and John Brown would *not* gravitate to their true places, and, secondly, by reason of certain conditions which govern competition, that they might succeed in obtaining the commission, and fail in its execution.

The two main hindrances to a successful determination by open competition are, first, unfitness of *new* material—by new material I mean artists who have not had practical experience in mural painting; secondly, unfitness of juries. These two unfitnesses react upon each other. Let us begin, for convenience

sake, because it is sooner discussed, by considering the second of these two objections—unfitness of the jury.

Very nearly the same qualities are requisite in a good juror as in a competent executant; therefore in an important case it is difficult to strengthen the jury without weakening the ranks of the competitors. We are still so young in mural painting in America that we have not a conveniently large number of men to choose from for the double service. If our mural painting had been long established the ideal condition would exist of many artists already working on commissions who would be too busy to compete, but not too busy to act as jurors. This condition will exist here in the future, let us hope in the near future, but does not as yet. There would probably be some first-rate artists whose absolute disapproval of competition would prevent their becoming competitors, but their very disapproval of the method would disincline them from being jurors, or at best would make them half-hearted.

In any first-rate artist temperament urges strongly; he is bound to lean toward certain kinds of technic, and even toward a certain class of subjects. Bias of this kind can be neutralized only by the appointment of a large jury, and, as stated above, such appointment, in its withdrawing of many men from possible competition, has distinct disadvantages.

In any competition some sort of subject has to be

given out, since even its widest scope must be appropriate to the place which will receive decoration. Now nearly every limitation of subject will be helpful to the juror, and make it easier for him to decide between this and that competitor. On the other hand, exactly the contrary will obtain with the competitor, since every limit put upon subject will, in direct ratio, limit the said competitor's individuality. Here is an almost insuperable obstacle to the *best* result.

If a single subject is given even in a closed competition, say of five competitors, it is certain to be more sympathetic to some than to others of the five. This at once constitutes inequality of opportunity. Again, each juror will lean by nature to one kind of subject rather than to another, as well as to some special kind of treatment—another condition which militates against perfect fairness of estimate. If, on the contrary, the commission were given by direct appointment, the commissioners and the artist would agree beforehand upon a subject sympathetic to both. Any really intelligent client can immensely increase his chance of getting valuable service from an architect, sculptor, or painter, by discussing his problem with him beforehand, and determining through what he learns in that discussion whether the temperament of that particular architect, sculptor, or painter is sympathetic with his own, and thereby likely to interpret his (the client's)

ideals as he would like to have them interpreted. But if you have a competition it is the competitor's first duty *not* to discuss his problem with the client or with any other competitor.

He may be ideally fitted to carry out the client's ideals, but he *is not allowed to find out what they are;* whereas, in the case of appointment, the client may study his artists as much as he likes beforehand, and by discussion of his problem with them get a good working knowledge of their temperaments, even if he cannot estimate their working capacities.

Now, in a competition two men are often so nearly equal that the question of taste and personal wish on the part of the client really ought to outweigh the perhaps very trifling superiority of one artist over the other. But, in accordance with the rules of a competition, the jury is rigidly held to give the award to the one who is better than the other, be it ever so little better, except in the very rare case of the jury knowing the *client's* temperament and wishes intimately enough to consult his real and ultimate advantage, as seen from the broadest point of view. From this same broadest point of view commission by direct appointment is thus far more practical than commission through competition.

Probably the greatest obstacle to healthy competing is the *a priori* conviction of the artist competitor, that the chance is very small of his going before a jury which will thoroughly comprehend him through

his sketch—that is to say, comprehend his aim toward a final purpose—and his further conviction that unless his aim is comprehended the jury could not possibly forecast the result which he might obtain in his finished work.

Now, there is a great deal *behind* a competitive sketch. There are some things which cannot be divined by anybody except their author, and there are some things which deceive even a clever jury, which, indeed, at times fool the author himself. It is well known to artists of experience that a painter may triumph with his sketch, and fall flat with his finished work. We have all seen sketches which were captivating in appearance, but which depended for their attractivenes upon qualities which would practically disappear as the work was enlarged. Sometimes such promise is obviously tricky, but often it is quite honest in the author of the sketch, and so subtle as to deceive the jurors and make an equitable decision impossible. In sum, men who make beautiful sketches sometimes cannot paint a good mural panel; while others who can do a large and admirable work are clumsy and ineffectual in their sketches. Every one of these conditions offers an argument against competitions.

Another argument is this: the carrying power of a sketch, considered simply as an impressive ensemble, is often, usually indeed, aided by incompleteness and by breadth of handling. On the other hand,

the carrying power of a sketch, as an expression of finality in the artist's intentions, is exactly the opposite. The artist's chance of showing to the jury just what he intends will be in proportion to the degree of elaboration and finish which he accords to his sketch. Therefore he will be obliged to choose between two kinds of effectiveness, either one of which conflicts with the other.

Again, psychological operation makes it almost impossible to a man to plan as convincingly upon an uncertainty as he would in the case of a decoration which he had received outright as a commission, and was, therefore, sure eventually to correct and perfect upon and from his first plan. In the former case, he has to complicate what *he* would like to do by what he thinks the jury would like to *have* him do, and the complication, sure to disturb, is apt also to weaken.

Again, it is open to question whether the moral effect of competitions is not unfortunate. Several men lose where one wins, and each loser is apt to feel with justice that he has not had a really free hand. That some of the strongest natures are stimulated by failure to greater endeavor is probable, but in view of their doubt as to the real equality of opportunity, most of the losers are disheartened; their morale is lowered. The public may answer that the artist is here subject to the common lot and that competition is a stimulus and is the soul

of business. To this the rejoinder is that art is a business only in a secondary sense; in the first sense it is art.

Again, business competition is practically continuous, unlimited by time, or at any rate limited only by result. A man who is making typewriters or automobiles may spend any amount of time on inventing improvements before he competes, and when he does compete, it is with *a completed article*, and he wins by a carefully planned and executed *result*. The artist in a competition can offer only a sketch which is but *experimental*, and the jury's dictum stands between *it* and result.

In a strictly limited competition open only to experts, who are paid for their sketches, some of the conditions stated in the foregoing paragraphs may be met, and others improved, but a limited competition at once throws out of court the public's first and most convinced contention that competition opens the widest opportunity to undiscovered talent.

Another objection to competition, limited or unlimited, is its enormous expense. In an architectural competition, the many thousands of dollars expended upon the competitive drawings in various architectural offices are sometimes so out of proportion to any obtainable return that on the next occasion some of the most promising candidates decide to stay out altogether. In the specific case of a competition recently held, one of our most experi-

George W. Breck: "Reflection." One of the ceiling panels in the library of the residence of the late Whitelaw Reid

enced architects calculated the money spent by the competing firms upon their drawings, and found that it amounted to more than the commission eventually paid to the winning competitor. In every case of an unpaid competition the public obtains something for nothing. In this case it received in cost of effort far more than seems just. Troublesome conditions of the kind I have mentioned do not come to the notice of the public, which, on the contrary, is easily caught by the specious semblance of equal opportunity.

Of course, there are two sides; the undiscovered genius *may* appear, but it is unlikely, and it would seem in the light of experience hitherto gathered that the nearer the open competition is kept to the schoolroom and the further from the great public enterprise the better. And this brings us to the strongest argument of all. New and untried talent should not be intrusted with the conduct of a great enterprise. For the latter, *experience* is required. Young Napoleons and Alexanders come but once in a thousand years; a young pilot would hardly be given a *Mauretania* to take into harbor on his first trip; the most brilliant young captain would scarcely command a division before he had taken any part in its manœuvres as a subordinate. To assume control of the decoration of a vast room is to embark upon a great enterprise; young and untried talent may find place in its conduct and may eventually

pass onward and upward to its direction, but to base the selection of the director upon the most brilliant sketch of a beginner would be to take unjustifiable risks with the public support and the public money. And by a beginner I mean any one who has not already taken an important subordinate part in the control of a decoration, and taken it successfully.

It would be unfair to dismiss this side of the subject without admitting that commission by direct appointment may open the door to one abuse worse than any which has crept into open competition. I refer to lobbying.

Lobbying, of course, *might* result in putting forward the right man, but also it might, through favoritism, make an utterly unworthy appointment, and it cannot be too carefully guarded against. For the less worthy an artist, the less likely he is to reply, as did Paolo Veronese to the Venetian senator who advised him to enter a competition: "I believe that I am fitter to merit commissions than to solicit them." In the great age of Italian art competitions do not seem to have been especially successful, else Vasari would have noted more than the few which he describes; and an army of pilgrims may thank their stars to-day that Pope Julius's way of instituting a "competition" was to give one series of walls to Raphael, another to Michelangelo, instead of asking them to submit competitive sketches to a jury composed, we will say, of himself and Giovanni de'

Medici, with Bramante and Giuliano da San Gallo to help them out on technical points.

On the whole, commission by appointment appears to be safer than a result obtainable by open competition, and the answer to the public's main contention would seem to be this: John Smith, brilliantly talented and inexperienced, is debarred by his inexperience from appointment to a headship, but is fitted by his talent to be appointed to a minor place in which place his talent will earn for him experience and assure his future.

IV

Let us suppose, then, that a competition is ordered, and architects' offices begin to buzz, and thousands of dollars' worth of time is put into drawings, most of which might be carried out in excellent buildings, yet most of which must perforce go unrewarded by the final great success. The jury meets and exhibits its strength and its weakness, the decision is made —enter the architect. Let us say at once that America, which is productive of ability, has been very successful in this particular product of a man who must be artist and engineer, imaginative and practical.

And think what a task lies before him. This great building is to be the temple of the Deity; that one is to stand for the law, and must not only shelter

him who pleads, but by its character suggest the majesty of justice which it enshrines. Or it is to be a library which stores up cubic measure of printed wisdom, and should manifest in its appearance its appropriateness to such guardianship; or a town hall, which shall suggest the aspirations and picture the achievements of a community. The muse rightly invoked eternalizes the souvenirs of man, but those two words—"rightly invoked"—infer so much. That art is long, he who sits before only a little panel or statuette can realize; how much more he who sets his hand to the construction of a great and complicated building!

Think of the whole that must be conceived *as* a whole; the parts that must be subordinated—their infinite and infinitely subtile interrelations, their sizes, proportions, shapes, colors, surfaces, the nature of their material, the character of their appearance, simple or complicated, austere or rich! What employment is here, what exaction! If we drop a pin into a delicate mechanism the disturbance may be felt by even ponderous wheels which that delicacy has served and governed at once. Anybody can understand this because anybody can see the disturbance that results. In a great building a small artistic mistake may also be far-reaching in its disturbance of general harmony, but this time it is not by any means every one who can realize it at first, because it is not so patent, and only such eyes

note it as are either prompted by feeling or informed by training. But the small mistake, if unnoted, can go on with its mischief until a big dissonance results, and you have a regular "house that Jack built" of successive mischances, all started by one little disagreement when the "dog began to worry the cat," with bad forms upon good proportions or something of the sort.

All this the architect must foresee, or rectify, or suffer for. Therefore he must be armed at every point; he must be a gladiator and fight the opinion of big and little where it is hurtful, and he must have a moral consciousness that can soar like an aeroplane above considerations of gain. He must, for example, reject in favor of cheaper material the costlier marble which would swell his commission, but might hurt his artistic effect. He must be modern and meet the modern problem, and in so doing turn his back resolutely upon some of the effects which he has most loved and most studied in buildings of the past, effects upon which he has been brought up to the comfort of his eyes and mind. He may not consider first of all the proportions which he would *like* to have. He may not spread out his plan, for he is building on ground more precious than gold, and he must squeeze his house, and press it together, and shoot it straight up into the air. Two feet of recess may cost thousands; two feet of projection may entail a lawsuit and

condemnation. He may not treat his façade with beautiful constructive ornament, but, instead, must make it into a kind of colander for the sifting of light into every cranny of a thousand office rooms, and in considering these same rooms he must unite something of the knowledge of a fireman, a purveyor of fresh air, and even of a sanitary inspector.

For this great building is to be useful, expressive, and beautiful all at once. The people have paid their money for this. What responsibility then weighs upon the architect! How truly can he be called creator, how fortunate if one day he may be able to look upon his work and see that it is good! How manifold must be his precautions! How almost infinite are the calls made upon his knowledge! How prodigious is the scope for his imagination! He must wear wings, yet grope in subcellars. He must have eyes for the glories of paradise painted under his dome, and at the same time to detect a leak in its lining. He must appreciate the excellence of the figures drawn upon his plaster and know that plaster's chemistry and endurance. Endurance of his own he must have, too, and the patience of Job with the walking delegate of the strikers.

And at the very beginning of things, if he wishes decorative beauty in his building he must become a missionary and a preacher. He is designing a town hall or State capitol. Now, beauty is expensive; it costs money; and upon the committee which makes

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KENYON COX: "The Light of Learning." Decoration in the Public Library, Winona, Minn.

Example of balance of masses and lines in the manner of the full Renaissance (early sixteenth century)

up the architect's building commission are sure to be men with veto power, who feel that their first duty in committee is to prevent unnecessary expenditure of the people's money, and who as honestly believe that beauty *is* unnecessary. To these men the architect goes cautiously, respecting at once their power and their undoubted sincerity, which may cost his building its æsthetic life.

The committeeman begins by believing that if the transaction of business is sheltered nothing more is needed. Gradually he admits the possibility of a few columns which not only "look nice" but hold up something. Soon, too, he realizes the attractiveness of rich marble, though he scents "graft" in its employment and examines into the thing carefully. When the architect attempts to show him that in certain cases a cheap material can be handsomer than a costly one he looks askance at his teacher and suspects him of hedging in some way and for some purpose. But his education goes on. The average member of a building committee is a good man, selected for very real qualities, and, though he may not have much knowledge of art, he has plenty of knowledge of other things.

By the time that the State capitol is finished the recalcitrant committeeman is often in love with the building from dome to pavement, and proud of the hand he has had in it; and the final relations between architects and their committees usually do the high-

est honor to both sides, and lead by reason of their success to even more important enterprises. Historians of art have celebrated the many-sidedness of the Renaissance architects who could build domes and paint miniatures, play the lute and write sonnets, carve intagli and colossi; but even of them we may believe were hardly exacted more kinds of knowledge than are asked of the modern architect.

"Are you a man or a *meeracle?*" says the sergeant to Kipling's Mulvaney in "My Lord the Elephant." "Betwixt and betune," replied Mulvaney. And so to me the architect has sometimes seemed betwixt and between a man and a miracle in his capacity for all-round knowledge.

III

IMPORTANCE OF EXPERIENCE IN THE MURAL PAINTER

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I

We have discussed the importance of decoration as a factor in civilization and the importance of harmony between the building commissioner who orders and pays for the decoration and the architect who designs and directs it. Under this second division we have placed the subdivisions which relate to the importance of the architect as an artist, and the importance of the selection of the executants. We have now to take up the various subdivisions of the importance of the mural painter's harmony with the building commissioner, with the architect, and with his fellow mural painters.

Before all this and as directly akin to the last words of the preceding chapter, we may consider the importance of *experience* in the mural painter, not forgetting that architecture and sculpture are closely related to painting, and that what is needed and required in the practitioner of one of the three branches is indispensable in the followers of the other two.

Experience, so absolutely necessary to the architect in control, is almost equally essential to the mural painter. If charity covers a multitude of sins, art covers and emboldens a deal of ignorance —the would-be practice or appreciation of art, that is. In the estimation of the general, art is by no means caviare, but something which they may partake of freely and assimilate by grace of nature; to many of them, in fact, art is universal license.

If their friend is dangerously ill they will not send a violinist or a painter to him, even if that violinist or painter has occasionally listened to a lecture upon a medical subject; but if the question is one relating to art they will cheerfully set some smatterer in the field merely because he is a personal acquaintance whom they desire to advance. If you take them to task, they say: "Yes, but in a case of dangerous illness it is a question of the life of a man." We answer: "And where art is concerned it is sometimes, as in the case of the Campanile of Venice, for instance, a question of a valuable life which lasted a thousand years, then ended for lack of an artist's supervision."

Tell them to start on a railway journey with an inexperienced person at the locomotive's throttle, to enter a rocky channel with a green hand at the helm, they would search your eyes for *dementia incipiens;* but ask them to embark an inexperienced person upon a long and exacting artistic enterprise among

rocks and shallows of all sorts of unapprehended difficulties, and they will say: "Why not?"

If they buy even a bulldog they will send an expert to select a prize-winner for them; but if it is a matter of art—! He who approaches the symbolical goddesses who stand for chemistry or physics draws near with respect. He admits that to succeed with *them* a man must *know;* but before the goddess of the arts the average man is a chartered libertine; "he may chuck her under the chin and sit on her knee."

You tell me perhaps: "We are tired of hearing the professional find fault with the public." Let me say at once that I am one of those who believe first and last in the public. It is for it that art in the end exists. I believe in the lay critic, the lay writer; above all, the lay appreciator, the men and women who make up the world-audience. I believe in them first and last, but *not* all the time. There are times when they err in indulgence or in severity, and when it becomes necessary for the artists to demand that the rules be observed, if needful to stand together like soldiers in a hollow square and fight for this observance.

A famous business man once said to me: "The trouble with American artists is exactly the same as with American business men. They don't work hard enough." The application of his proposition to the business man surprised me; in the case of the

artist it may be that he sometimes does not work hard enough, but it is certain that where the matter in hand is some great decorative undertaking the public often does not permit him to *think* hard and long enough—to prove his thought by sufficient experiment.

As we have said, one of the first of the sine-quanons in the successful decoration of a great public building is that experience plus talent shall conduct the enterprise. And here again the client, which in this case is the public, accepts our admonition with an "of course, of course"—then shows lack of comprehension by proceeding somewhat as follows: A great court-house in the capital of the State of Cloudland is to be built. Some one suggests that A and B and C, experienced mural painters in—say, New York, or Philadelphia, or Chicago—be consulted, and that one of them be chosen to direct the work. Straightway somebody else cries: "No! We must have a Cloudland man to do Cloudland work. John Smith, born in Cloudland, is full of talent; he spent four years at the Atelier Tel-et-Tel in Paris, and has had a medal at the Salon." So John Smith, of Cloudland, is given the direction of the work.

Now, nothing can be more praiseworthy or more natural than the feeling which prompts such action on the part of the building commissioners for the court-house. They are sincere, earnest, patriotic, and they wish to give the local man an opportu-

)Arthur Crisp: "The Attributes of Dramatic Art." Decoration for wall
by stairway, Belasco Theatre

nity. Nevertheless there are many chances that they will be mistaken in their action.

There is a deal of artistic talent all over the country, a deal of it in Cloudland, presumably a deal of it in John Smith. But there is very little special experience in the country, and such experience is absolutely essential to the successful conduct of so exacting an undertaking as is the decoration of a public building; for decoration, which is a great branch of art, happens also to be a science—or at least to have one foot based upon it—and science is exact knowledge, the fruit of experience and only of experience.

It is right that John Smith should be granted the privilege conferred by his nativity and backed by his talent. It is right that the young men, young in experience, that is—I do not care how few or how many years they may have lived—right, I say, that these young men, if they have shown ability and character, should be recompensed for the same, should be given an under-part in the work, and so win experience and pass onward and upward to the control of later work.

But the headship of such an enterprise should be intrusted only to a man who has already proven his capacity as a leader and a controller. Feeling will not suffice; knowledge is *required*. The qualities which gave John Smith his medal in the Salon will probably be of great help in eventually making him

a decorator, but no Pallas Athene of talent can spring fully armed from the brain of any atelier whatever, be it in Olympus or Paris or New York, new-born, and yet ready to assume the direction of a great work which demands co-ordination of all sorts based upon nothing short of past experience.

Certainly, every one must agree with the proposition that the young men should have an opportunity. It is in them that lies our only hope of future decoration in America. But this does not mean that the men who by hard study have learned to decorate shall step aside and give their place to those who wish to learn. Such a proposition could not be reasonably entertained in any business or profession or at any time of the earth's history. If a great tower were to be erected, and an architect successfully laid the foundations to it, surely no building commission would say: "Now we will delay the further erection until other and younger architects have learned to lay foundations." If they did, the result would be a country full of foundations without any towers upon them.

And that is in a sense what will happen if we lean too much to local patriotism; for in such a case what begins as nationalism easily becomes parochialism. If the work is to be given to John Smith only because he is of Cloudland, this will happen. In each State and county the local artist will be preferred; now, *continued* and *repeated* experience is needed to make

a director of decoration. On the other hand, there cannot, save in a few great States, be enough important work to build up with reasonable rapidity and fortify such experience as would warrant leadership in decoration. Many years would have to elapse before the really experienced decorator could be developed; the land would be full of half-educated artists doing work beyond their capacity instead of painting under men who would gradually lead them to the top. In the story, the old lady always saved the ripe apples till they began to decay, and so finally ate them all rotten; we should reverse this system and eat all our apples unripe and sour.

It should be axiomatic that only through repeated opportunity can a man become a mural painter, but he should not become one through the cession of opportunity by men older in experience, but rather through the natural and gradual development of more general opportunity. This opportunity can arise only through popularization, and popularization can be produced only by the intrinsic excellence of the work shown. It is quite true that a certain popularization comes from a spirit of rivalry between different localities, and a spirit of imitation, but this is a dangerous state of mind based upon artificiality. Unless the excellence of the work is sustained it will cease to interest; people will find out that, though they have kept abreast of their neighbor over the way, they do not really care for what they have ob-

tained, and then the spirit of imitation will manifest itself quite as naturally and rapidly in the abandonment of decoration as it did in undertaking it.

II

So much then for the statement that experience plus talent is absolutely necessary to him who is to be given the conduct of an important part in decoration. A few examples of the puzzles and troubles that confront a mural painter who is engaged upon an important work are sufficient to demonstrate the truth of this statement.

To begin with, in a great building in course of erection, the mural painter or the sculptor has to do his thinking under certain physically and materially difficult conditions. In Chicago, at the World's Fair, we mural painters wore sweaters, the wind blew the turpentine out of our cups and stiffened our fingers; in Washington, under a summer sun beating upon the dome of the Library of Congress, we worked in gauze underclothing only, and drank a bucketful of ice-water a day; in another great building, when the steam was turned on in September to dry the plastering, one of my assistants became very sick, but went bravely on with his painting. These are only physical discomforts, but they make it hard to do thoughtful work. Something, however, that is more than physical goes into trying to com-

pel vast spaces to tell as one piece; into making thirty figures scale alike, and scale with the architecture too; into considering the amount of air that is to come between the decoration and its spectator—sometimes ten feet of air, sometimes one hundred and fifty; into suiting various portions of your decoration to the different lighting of different parts of the same space; into allowing for the treatment of curved surfaces; into conforming your composition of masses and lines to the sort of ornament, rich or severe, that is to surround it; into neutralizing the effect of unfortunate reflections; into realizing that, deprived as we are, in mural work, of the resource of varnish, only repeated experience teaches what our overpaintings may dry into.

With all of these difficulties to consider and many, very many more, which I have no space to note, is it hard to accept my affirmation that not talent alone but talent backed by experience is absolutely essential to him who would direct a great enterprise in mural painting? Take a man who is full of ability and set this problem before him; for a time he will be bewildered, and there are things which nobody can tell him; he must find them out for himself.

One of the most brilliant of American painters, Alfred Collins, who was taken away from us only too early, and to our great loss, came into the Vanderbilt Gallery one day when I was painting there on a large decoration. He criticised a certain part

of my work. I said: "That has been puzzling me, too, and I have made repeated changes in that particular place. Take my palette, and go up on the scaffold, and make the change yourself; suggest what you would like to see." He went up the ladder and painted a little while, then came down and viewed his work from the floor. "Why, it doesn't look at all the same from here as from the scaffold." "No," I replied, "that's what I've been finding out over and over again for several years." He remounted the scaffold, returned twice to the floor, then put the palette back into my hands and said, laughing: "I give it up."

A commission for a decoration in a public building had been allotted to Collins. A few weeks later he decided to decline it, and told me that he did not for the moment feel able to take the time necessary to acquire such *experience* as would enable him to handle the work properly. That Collins would have made a brilliant decorator could he have taken time to grow gradually along the lines of mural work I feel sure; that under the circumstances he was wise in declining I am almost equally certain.

The most delightful example which we have of simplicity dauntlessly confronting complexity is probably that of William Morris and his friends at Oxford volunteering an attack upon a stone-vaulted ceiling. They were full of subject-matter—which latter was to treat of knights and dragons and such—

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ELLIOTT DAINGERFIELD: "The Epiphany." Part of the decoration in the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, New York City

and they were full of a high courage, too, and of an enthusiasm so compelling that when a coat of linked mail was made for them to paint from and was sent up from London, Morris put it on and insisted upon wearing it at luncheon. They had delightful swords and helmets, but their artistic weapons and ammunition were not as substantial as their costume properties. They painted *with water-color brushes on the rough, unprepared stone surface*, so that Preraphaelite compositions by Morris, Burne-Jones, and Rossetti, of gods and heroes, vanished from the walls almost as fast as they were painted upon them. No beginner would follow them quite as far to-day, though their naïveté was so charming, their sincerity so evident, that one envies them.

Certainly to-day's beginner has every right to make some mistakes without being laughed at. If he is told that he must at once prepare his color-sketch and must plan all his operations for a room which is to be completed in six months, he goes to the said room to inspect and consider it, and finds it very probably choked with scaffolding from floor to ceiling, and in almost black darkness. In the midst of the forest of uprights and horizontal planks, which nearly shut out all light, he has to decide whether the scale of his figures will be right, whether his tones are too light or too dark, his colors too weak or too strong. It will not be surprising if the beginner says to himself: "My calculation may not turn out right

the first time." If he does not say as much, and does not proceed with caution, he is likely to lose the game on his very first cast of the die. Too much caution, on the other hand, will tie his hands; and many a tame-looking interior proceeds from the fact that the inexperienced decorator, new to his task, gropes timidly for himself instead of working with assurance under some one else, and upon the basis of that some one else's experience.

Perhaps you say: "But a man must begin somewhere. Did not the painters of the Renaissance fearlessly attack any problem, and did not every little place have its local man able to celebrate the local *fastes?*" To this I can reply: "Such is the general impression, but it is a false one."

Nowhere in the world has parochialism in politics, and in art, too, been stronger than in Italy. Campanile has vied with campanile in the celebration of its local men; and the mediæval hate of town for town has frequently only softened into a prejudice which now and again is loudly expressed to-day. Nevertheless, the most important local enterprises in the heyday times of decoration were not always, not even generally, confided to the local man, but were governed, or at any rate influenced, by the great artists of the moment. Duccio, the Lorenzetti, and Martini—all Siennese—decorated not only the city but the whole province, and pushed, some of them, as far as Naples in the south and probably Avignon in

the north. Giotto and his direct colaborers covered the walls of Italy from Naples to Padua. Benozzo Gozzoli and Pinturicchio went up and down Tuscany and Umbria; Mantegna's and Perugino's were (in very different ways) names to conjure with in many parts of the peninsula. Michelangelo's almost universal influence was even baneful, because too big and forceful for the comprehension of his average worshipper. Raphael, it is true, did hardly any decoration outside of Rome, but only because his short life could spare little working time to clients *extra muros*, even if they wore crowns or coronets. Venice drew to herself the cleverest artists from the mountains, lakes, and plains of the mainland—from Verona, Cadore, Conegliano, the Bergamasque territory; made great artists, world-masters, of them, and sent them out again to decorate the walls of all north Italy with little reference to their nativity, but counting always upon their record of experience; while Tiepolo filled Lombardy, the Veneto, South Germany, and Spain with the fruits of his prodigious activity. It is easy to note an exception or two, examples to prove the rule, to cite Correggio in Parma (though even in his case it was lack of outside, rather than excess of local, appreciation that induced his insularity), or to say that the presence of the Urbinate Bramante at the papal court gave to the Urbinate Raphael his opportunity. In the main the minor decorative works of Italy were carried out by the

local men. The big marking cycles of decoration for the public buildings were the work of the great masters who painted not only at home but far afield.

It is infinitely unlikely that any man to whom decoration is a new undertaking, no matter how gifted he might be, could successfully confront the problems of scale, of lighting, of color, and of modelling, as influenced by the said lighting and by distance. That is why he should not be given the headship of any important decorative enterprise at first, but should win his chevrons under a superior officer before he earns his epaulets as commander. Perhaps you say: "But is it not better to select a big man to head a big enterprise? Will not his mistakes be at least the mistakes of a big man instead of a little one? Is it not better to risk something upon him than to employ some minor personality?" *Of course*, it might be; but where is the necessity for such a choice? Such action we had to take twenty-five years ago, for at that time, save John La Farge, we had no master-decorator in the field; then if La Farge were busy elsewhere the best line of action to follow was to give the commission to the most eminent artist procurable, and trust to his working out the decorative problem by degrees, and by reason of his all-round capacity. But to-day those first men who were chosen, as well as a whole group of others, have proved their ability to lead; and there is not the slightest need of confiding to an

inexperienced talent, however eminent, the conduct of any important enterprise.

On the contrary, if America is truly to profit by the unparalleled opportunity which social, industrial, and geographical conditions may in a near future offer to the decorative artist, architect, sculptor, painter, we must demand the ultimate of the latter, the ultimate in talent and experience. He must know the art of bygone times thoroughly in order that he may utilize its happenings and processes in meeting the needs of the present. He must sympathize with the branches of art which are sisters to his own; and, in sum, he must be a veritable Janus looking backward for all that the past may teach him, yet not forgetting that he is an American among Americans, looking forward upon the threshold of no one knows how potential a future.

IV

HARMONY BETWEEN BUILDING COMMISSIONER AND MURAL PAINTER

IV

HARMONY BETWEEN BUILDING COMMISSIONER AND MURAL PAINTER

I

THERE is an art which is of the people, for the people, by the people. It is of the people, for it celebrates their annals; it is for them, for it is spread upon the walls of their buildings—the public buildings; it is by the people, for it is created by the men who were born on our prairies or in our cities. It is non-partisan; it preaches to Democrat and Republican alike. It should be fostered by both, yet it is misunderstood by both. This art should be a queen and *is* a Cinderella. She holds the wand of her fairy godmother, Imagination, and can turn the commonplace into gold, gold which is instruction and stimulus to greater action. Yet our governing boards would only too often for false economy's sake turn back the golden chariot of imagination into a pumpkin again.

This art is the art of mural painting and decorative sculpture—in a wider sense, the art of decoration.

To-day in America we have an altogether unparalleled opportunity. We have vast wealth, we have vast territory. We have cities planned and cities building, and cities built yet growing. Under less favorable circumstances Greece and Italy, France and England raised monuments which have been a joy and an illustration for millennials. How careful, then, we should be of our opportunity, for unless we do have a care we may leave behind us buildings many of which at best are but half successes, some of which occasion little save regret.

Why did they do so well in the past? Because the artist—I mean the architect, sculptor, painter—had the people as his constituency, and the *people* gave their labor and their money freely in exchange for beauty, which to them was a commodity, a commodity understood and valued. Together with beauty the people demanded utility and convenience, and obtained them, but they never forgot beauty, and in the creation of that great teacher of history, patriotism, morals, æsthetics, which is the decorated public building—town hall, or temple, or cathedral —they never condemned beauty to take even a *second* place.

Why have we done so much less well? Because our people never think of giving beauty the first place. Above it they set convenience, and sometimes above that financial benefit to some person or persons indeterminate.

T. W. Dewing: "The Days." Decoration in the home of Miss Cheney, South Manchester, Mass.

You may reply that we do *not* always sacrifice beauty, and, secondly, that utility is more important than beauty. The answer to your first objection is that there have been a number of honorable exceptions of State capitols and court-houses and libraries whose commissioners have seriously insisted upon beauty, but I am here characterizing and condemning the greater number of cases. To your second objection one may reply that to sacrifice utility to beauty might be wrong, but that no such sacrifice is necessary. With brains, money, and patience, utility and beauty may always become yoke-fellows in a great public building, since beauty is indeed the *artistic expression* of *utility*.

II

Why, then, do we not have them together, since brains our architects have, money our public appropriates, and of patience there still exists a modicum? Let us look into the matter.

In decoration the relation of artist to client will for some time be complicated by the newness of the situation. In American art mural painting is a newcomer. Even in Europe it is the child of a relatively recent renaissance, a renaissance forty years old at most. But in America it is more than a newcomer; it is a newcomer environed and confronted by wholly changed conditions. It is like a leader of a brand-

new political party bringing in with him a group of men who "knew not Joseph" and whose ideas of government and economy are revolutionary. The buyer and collector of easel pictures, donor to and founder of museums, is one of two things—either he is a cultured man and lover of art, or else he is one who wishes to *become* cultured and to be a patron. In the first case he relies on his own culture, in the second on the culture of friends or experts who teach him how to buy and give. But in either case, and this is my point, he studies the intrinsic and market value of the pictures, and a considerable price asked and paid adds zest to his action and prestige to his collection. To put a great deal of money into his purchase intelligently is one of his objects. Now in the procedure which occurs in relation to mural painting exactly the contrary obtains.

Mural painting in America is usually accorded only to public or semipublic buildings, capitols, town halls, court-houses, libraries, churches, schools, theatres, hotels. The erection of a public building is placed in the hands of a board of building commissioners. These men are presumably chosen for their business ability, their integrity, and their public spirit, and in most cases they prove their possession of these attributes. But also in most cases they differ absolutely in their point of view on this particular matter from the private collector and donor to museums. The collector means to have the best

art, but he knows that for the best he must lavish money, though he is determined that intelligence shall so guide his lavishness as to resolve it into a future asset and profit. Now I am not speaking of the connoisseur who accidentally becomes a building commissioner, but of the average commissioner who is in quite another state of mind. He also wishes to have the best art, and demands it, but he desires even more strongly not to expend much of the people's money for it. Able and honest though he is in other respects and along other lines, he does not understand art.

He cannot see far enough into the future to realize that good mural panels will inevitably become a financial asset, and his reasoning, though honest, will not go deep enough to prove to him that public money expended on third-class art is public money squandered. He does not, until after he has acquired real experience, know the difference between first, second, and third rate art, and he suspects those who could teach him, suspects them of being interested. Now we must not account this as blameworthy, for it is natural and at first inevitable.

The building commissioner, no matter how able he may be, can learn, as the rest of us do, only by experience, and for a long time he is bound to be the victim of circumstances which he can but gradually learn to control.

He is a good business man, his strongest instinct

is to not make a bad investment, and his first idea of a good investment is of one which returns more than it demands. He thinks in terms of straight commercialism. For instance, he knows that to make a certain kind of shoe costs such a sum, to make a thousand of them would cost a thousand times as much minus such discount as wholesale manufacture renders possible. He learns that a picture two feet square, by Mr. Blank, the artist, has just been sold for so much. He expects Blank to be able to tell him at once exactly what a lunette superficially twenty times as large shall cost. He cannot conceive why the artist is doubtful and hesitates, and he suspects him of hedging. But the shoe is a problem which has been proved; it is well known just how much time and material go to its making. It is not so with the painted lunette—the work may proceed rapidly or slowly, may demand, as it develops, more or less elaboration than the author had expected when he contracted for it. What a field is here for disappointment and suspicion, and perfectly honest disagreement between the artist and the commissioner who is navigating untried waters!

The commissioners thoroughly understand economy when it means saving money by not expending it; when, for instance, it amounts to paying one thousand dollars to B instead of twenty-five hundred to A; but they cannot understand the economy

which consists in not spending good money upon feeble thought or poor work. They cannot comprehend the waste involved in paying B one thousand dollars for almost worthless creations, instead of giving twenty-five hundred to A for something good. The output is obvious to them, the value returned is unfamiliar, they cannot estimate it, and when the architect assures them that it is great, they think of him doubtfully, as of one necessarily interested and probably prejudiced.

Again, save in rare cases, the commissioners cannot grasp the importance of the art required in the creation of a public building. Tradition has consecrated it, history celebrated it, fashion has dictated pilgrimage to shrines of art as a duty, and, indeed, the commissioner himself while on his particular pilgrimage to Europe may be temporarily dazzled while he is actually in presence of the building or picture or statue, but when he has turned his back upon them his memory is too imperfect to sustain enthusiasm. A, who is a famous and experienced architect, or sculptor, or painter, suggests to the building commissioners a creation which shall cost *so much* and shows his design. B, a much less interesting artist, offers another costing one-quarter as much. The commissioners say, in all sincerity, that as soon as preliminary business is cleared away they will give the commission to A as the better man.

The clearing of preliminary business proceeds, the bills for lighting and plumbing are much larger than were expected, also some other bills. Economy must be practised; *where* shall this occur? In the *decoration* of the building, *of course*—lighting and plumbing are *necessary*, art as a superfluity may be mulcted.

Now this is *folly*, folly most of all in a new country which lacks the example of fine buildings. Good art is not a superfluity; it is a prime necessity; it comes immediately after indispensable convenience, and much convenience might to advantage be dispensed with in its favor. Lighting, heating, and plumbing should be of the best, but should not for one moment be provided at the *expense* of good art. Science advances so fast that in relatively few years the systems of lighting, heating, plumbing, will be improved out of existence in that particular building, and will have to be paid for over again. On the other hand, the best art lasts practically forever. The pilgrims to the decorations of the Sistine Chapel fell into line four hundred years ago, and are still on the march; the marble deities of the Parthenon's pediments and frieze have received visitors for more than two thousand years. In short, the commissioners who dock the appropriation for decoration in favor of the appropriation for plumbing and lighting sacrifice the possibly enduring for the inevitably ephemeral.

But you could not convince any building commission of that, unless it be composed of men who at once think for themselves, respect historical records, and listen fair-mindedly to artists and experts. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred you could not win your case, for you would not be allowed to plead it. Immediate economy would be the order of the day at the meeting. B's design, which cost only one-quarter as much as A's, would gain enormously in its appeal, so much, indeed, as to look nearly as good as A's; and the commissioners, sincerely desirous of doing right, would be perplexed by many worrying conditions. We have said that forced to retrenchment they are hesitating between the first-rate artist A, whose work is expensive, and the second-rate man B, whose services may be had for much less; but if they choose to, the commissioners may descend far lower in the scale of price and almost as certainly of intrinsic value.

At their elbow stand representatives of various firms of decorators and of department stores, saying, "We will do all this work for half B's price," and showing sketches dangerously attractive to the non-professional, because making up for a lack of real merit by a profuse display of detail and high finish. Recently a talented young mural painter told me that an order for a decoration had been practically given him, and had been warmly approved by the architect, when, at the last moment, he lost it in

this wise. A department store sent word to the client that if he would buy all his rugs from their firm they would *include* mural painting for the rooms. Again, the same young artist had entered into negotiations for the painting of seven subjects in a panelled room; a "decorative" firm offered to do twice as many panels for half the money. In each case the client yielded to the temptation of a lower price, and in each case as well his conclusions may seem doubtful to the unprejudiced onlooker.

It is perhaps only natural that the local houses should also sometimes appeal to the building commissioner's patriotism, saying: "We are *local* men; give us the work and not a dollar of your taxpayers' money shall leave our town, whereas A comes from New York, or Chicago, or Philadelphia, and what he receives will be literally taken away from us."

Amid all these specious appeals and counter-statements the commissioners are so harried that compromise sometimes ensues; they reject the work of A, the first-rate artist, so that they may economize money for the plumbing; then they decline the offer of the department store, in the interest of high art, and feel that by thus compromising they are, on the whole, doing rather a handsome and artistic thing for the public in giving it the uninteresting second-rate work of B instead of fourth-rate commercial work offered perhaps by a frank jobber, or the first-rate work of A. They have made a deplorable mistake,

BARRY FAULKNER: Fragment of decoration in the house of Mrs. E. H. Harriman

Example of the decorative effect of elaborate detail carried out in fifteenth-century style and with the heads treated as portraits

because they are unenlightened, and their public will suffer for it long after they, the commissioners, *become* enlightened, for it is only enlightenment which they lack. The building commissioners are sincere and patriotic men, chosen for their public spirit and their business capacity, and both commission and public away down at the bottom of their consciousness want the *best* art in return for their money. Only the best art is *fit* for the decoration of the public building, and if you put it straightly at them the people admit this at once, but the bottom of their artistic consciousness can be reached only by patient sounding, which must be incessant if it is to be effectual against the mass of misconception which constantly accumulates upon the surface.

V

MUTUALITY BETWEEN ARCHITECT AND MURAL PAINTER

V

MUTUALITY BETWEEN ARCHITECT AND MURAL PAINTER

Besides the possession of talent and experience there must be mutuality of effort between architect and mural painter. If we can have real co-operation, beauty will come after it as surely as harvest after seed-time. But it must be real; it must not resume itself in a mere suggestion on the part of the building committee that the architect shall consult the best talent, followed by his only saying in turn to the various painters: "Now, I count on you to respect each other's work and to obtain an harmonious ensemble." That is not enough. To begin with, the sculptor and painter must believe in the architect as commander-in-chief, leader, designer, and creator of a whole, which they are to enhance *as* a whole by their art; and again they must see in him the planner of interrelated parts whose interrelations they must help, not hinder.

I have heard painters say: "What does an archi-

tect know about painting?" Now the architect, in spite of his general knowledge, is, like the painter, a specialist, and therefore is forced to neglect much that pertains to painting because he has not had time to learn it. But I am certain that if any competent mural painter will take pains to show things in the right way, he will be understood in the right way by the architect. The trouble is that each branch of a profession has a technical jargon of its own, unfamiliar to the practitioners of the two sister branches; but all that applies specially to either sculpture or painting can be reduced to terms which are understood by architect, painter, and sculptor alike, and which may constitute a kind of artistic Volapük—a common language, like the mediæval Latin of the church.

We have thus far done fairly well in decorative painting in America, but we have made some mistakes, and our worst errors have arisen from lack of proper co-operation, which has come, not from a want of honest enthusiasm or individual knowledge, but because a certain comprehension has been wanting. It has been stated over and over again from the beginning that architect, sculptor, and painter must work together in the sense of producing a mutual result, but it has not been realized that the three minds must, for a time at least, work simultaneously and intercommunicatively—that the three men must agree to all give up some of their time *at*

Copyright by the city of Yonkers

A. E. Foringer and Vincent Aderente: "Yonkers, Past and Present." Panel from the series in the new Court-House

An example of decoration by two men who have trained themselves for team-work and of concentration of two tempera- [illegible] Messrs. Aderente and Foringer have been my assistants in the painting of most of my decorations.—E. H. B.)

the same time to the problem. The architect is almost sure to be foreseeing and resourceful, but he cannot be in two places at once and there are contingencies which no man can foresee. He needs not only the support of his staff, but their constant watchful effort.

And the co-operation should begin at the beginning. I would have the painter as well as the sculptor go with the architect to the quarry when the stone is selected, so that he, the architect, the director, in company with the sculptor and painter, his aids, shall see and know just what character of color, what tone and depth the three shall have to calculate upon in their various results. For if it is the business of the expert to know the durability of the marble, and that of the architect to determine its effect of line and mass, scale and proportion, it is the business of the painter to say what color effect it may produce and what it may call for in other marbles. And I would have this little federation go further afield: to the artist who puts on the gold, and the artist who carves the wood, and the artists who make the glass and weave the carpet. That they are on the general staff we have said, and that they are consulted; but to-day they too often remain in their tents till the battle is engaged and half over. I would have them ride not only into the pitched field, but also, and above all, in reconnoissance to spy out the land before the battle.

Indeed, the carrying through of the ensemble and details of a great building should be done almost under martial law. Woe to him who is undisciplined. If a man cannot subordinate himself let him keep out of mural painting. All art is a convention and is under restraint—most of all is decorative art so; and if an artist is big enough he cannot give better proof of his power than in compelling the relation of his work to be harmonious with its surroundings, while he yet remains *himself*.

We have proceeded rightly up to a certain point in decoration, but not far enough. To-day the architect of the State capitol of Cloudland, let us call it, selects six mural painters to decorate his building, and allots to them his various wall spaces. The artists make their rough sketches, the architect convenes them, they mutually compare their work, and sincerely declare that they will do everything that they can to work harmoniously.

Almost at once starts the train of circumstances which interrupts their willingness and interferes with their harmony. A is very busy finishing a canvas for another State; he cannot commence his decoration for some months. B, on the contrary, must begin his at once, since he has engagements for the future which compel immediate action unless he would indefinitely postpone his Cloudland work. C has a room or wall space or corridor midway between the decorations of A and B. If the vision

can embrace these three decorations or even portions of the three at the same time, it is essential that C's work should harmonize with and unite that of the other two painters.

A proceeds with his decoration; after a while B, who has also commenced his work and carried it well forward, goes to see A, and says in great surprise: "But A, the sketch you showed at the architect's office was in a cool gray key; I have been treating my decoration in harmony with your sketch, and now you are working in a warm orange key upon your large canvas!" "Yes," replies A, "I suddenly discovered that they were going to exchange the gray Circassian walnut of my wooden furnishings for a very red mahogany." "But how does it happen that you had no warning?" "Well, the architect was called away to the west on business, and A B & Co., the decorative firm, who are in charge of the woodwork, changed their mind about the latter."

Or, Mr. C has been told that his room will get little light because of the thick stained glass of rather dark warm tones. He therefore paints his decoration in flat planes of brilliant color exactly suited to such a twilight effect. When it is finished and he brings it to its place he finds twice as much light as he expected and pale transparent glass in the cupola. His own colors, which would have been just right for the room as first planned, are now strident, his

effect spoiled. He protests and the glassmaker replies: "The building commission insisted that they must have more light. There was nothing to do but to humor their insistence."

Or Mr. C D composes his decoration and has half finished it when some one remarks: "By the way, they will have to set a ventilator in the middle of your wall."

These are only a few instances among very many difficulties which may unexpectedly present themselves. Is it the fault of the architect? No, not more than it is the fault of any and all of us that we do not quite realize what an enormously difficult and complicated problem we have before us in a great building, nor enough consider that, while the architect must be argus-eyed, his staff too must remember their responsibility not only to him and to their own work, but to every one of the many artists in stone, glass, bronze, pavement, mural painting, whose work in any way abuts upon theirs. It may be impossible to prevent some mischances, but at least an elaborate plan of campaign should do much toward forestalling some of the changes, and a united front of many artists opposing a decision of the building commissioners (besides taking some responsibility off the architect's shoulders) might go far toward preventing unwisdom. And such opposition would, in nine cases out of ten, not displease the building commissioners, since the latter are

really seeking for the best solution of their problem, and are glad to avoid change as being costly.

In some few cases this mutual federation of architect, sculptor, and painter has been tried, and found to work so well that it has been continued after the completion of the building, continued in the form of a permanent advisory art committee, whose duty is to protect the building from any unwise additions or changes.

That there is need of such advisory work we have had abundant evidence. I will note one instance: In a certain great building by one of our best-known architects, a room was decorated with painting and sculpture at much expense. The effect depended in the main upon several large wall panels of smooth simple stone. These panels, surrounded by rich sculpture, gave repose to the eye, and were the natural complement and foil to the ceiling and upper walls, which were elaborately decorated with paintings, relief, and gold. The building commission, delighted with the room, showed it with pride and celebrated it in print.

After a while they filled the panels with full-length portraits of gentlemen in black clothes and surrounded by heavy gilt frames. They thereby utterly ruined the effect which the architect had planned. The portraits, if properly panelled into the right kind of a wall in another room, might have produced an admirable result. As they are now they spoil the effect of the stone, and are in turn

themselves spoiled by the light stone about them, which makes such a background as their painters would never have selected.

You say these gentlemen must be dull. Not so, they are among the most intelligent men in the community, and were honestly enthusiastic, to begin with, about their room. The result of their action has been the almost complete cancellation of the value received from their artists. If such a cancellation had taken place in any other part of their building, in their transaction of business, that is, and such depreciation had resulted they would have bestirred themselves at once, but it has not occurred to them that this matter could be of importance. They wanted portraits of their colleagues, and, having them, simply ordered them to be put into the finest room, and where they could see them well —then thought no more of it. Had an advisory committee of architect, sculptor, and painter said to them, "But, gentlemen, your portraits will kill the room, and the room will kill the portraits," I cannot help believing that they would have renounced their project, and thus advisory stimulus would have helped to bring about mutual action between artist and client; in fact, would have helped to raise and maintain a standard of taste.

In this effort toward mutuality, vital to the success of any great enterprise in decoration, the architect is then essentially the head and commander-in-

ELMER E. GARNSEY: One of a series of "Paintings of Seventeenth-Century Ports" in the Collector's room of the United States Custom-House, New York City

An example of landscape treated historically and decoratively

chief. He designs the building and assigns to each sculptor and painter his place in it. But if this is his unquestionable right it is also his privilege to expect and to receive authoritative assistance from both sculptor and painter, not only as their work progresses, but even before it begins. In a general way he, the architect, knows beforehand what manner of man is suited to some special work, but in a particular way that man, once selected, knows in turn how to fit his own temperament to that work and how he may best suggest amplification or elaboration of it. The architect, burdened with the great weight of his responsibility, has a right to demand that the painters and sculptors shall minimize that weight by intimate and patient collaboration.

Our educational institutions have no worthier task before them along the lines of art than the preparation of men who shall learn how to help toward this end and be willing to help at some sacrifice. For the untrained worker is a burden to the architect; the man who knows and will use his knowledge reasonably and patiently is a blessing. On the other hand, to the advice of the trained sculptor and mural painter the architect, master and commander though he be, may, indeed must, at times, listen as to the sister arts speaking with authority.

Architect, sculptor, and painter have each received a special training during which, if they are wise, they will have carefully considered the kin-

dred lines of the sister branches of their art; yet each remains essentially architect, or sculptor, or painter, and certain details, even certain principles, familiar to one of his two comrades will be unfamiliar, perhaps unnoticed by him, till his collaborator notes them and formulates them from the point of view of his own particular expertism. I have seen an otherwise clever painter so arrange his panel in reference to surrounding members of the wall that the architect said, with reason: "But this is *impossible*." In such a case the painter must alter his work. On the other hand, now and then, even if rarely, an architect has put in a detail of color which any painter at his elbow would have forbidden.

And when I say a detail I mean hundreds of feet of marble which cost thousands of dollars. In the beginning, and when the order was given, it would have cost ten words to make it right. After the mistake was made it would have taken prohibitory time and cost prohibitory money to rectify it. The greatest artists are capable of solecisms and errors along lines akin to, but not identical with, their own. A little consultation would obviate such mistakes, and we do not want the blunders even of a Michelangelo when they can be avoided. And blunders he did make—they all made them—Bramante and Raphael and Leonardo made them just as we do, only theirs were blunders of men who lived in an age of great art, and at the same time they made

masterpieces, setting lessons to an admiring world. When Michelangelo painted the "Last Judgment," he botched the joining and gravely injured the architectonic effect of the chapel, but he is Michelangelo, and we are glad to take him in exchange for Perugino. Correggio's angels are strangely out of character with the grand austere Romanesque shell of the cathedral at Parma, but Romanesque churches are many—Correggio's ecstatic outburst is unique.

For that matter, disturbance, arising from the introduction of new and changed methods, has been inevitable where the theatre of performance has existed for five hundred years, and the sixteenth-century artist had to paint within a yard or two of the work of the *tre cento*. History repeats itself, and in the future, when there shall arise better-equipped artists than those of to-day, anachronistic additions may again be welcome. But in the present it is for us to do our work so faithfully and so thoughtfully as to make that future remote.

VI

MUTUALITY OF MURAL PAINTERS

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MUTUALITY OF MURAL PAINTERS

I

The relations of the mural painter with the building commissioner and with the architect have been discussed in preceding chapters. We come now to the relations of mural painters with each other, and to the thorniest and most delicate question in the range of decoration—the question of precedence. Thorny though it be, if it is grasped as one would grasp a nettle and by a hand which wears the gauntlet of assured experience—difficult though it be, if it is approached with tact and adhered to with patience the problem can be solved.

It is a prodigious problem, indeed; nothing less than to compel into accord various temperaments of men who control not only the design and coloring of pictured panels and mosaics, but of ornament, rich or severe, toning of gold, patina of bronze, depth or clearness of glass, design and color of pavements, selection of rugs, and very much besides.

First must come the wise distribution of this work,

then the harmonious conduct of it. If even the artists of the culminating epoch made mistakes, what procedure shall we follow to minimize *our* errors?

Let us consider this question of distribution. In the largest sense all branches of art are equally great and important; all have certain vital principles in common, as well as much detail of procedure. Decoration (mural painting or decorative sculpture) is, however, essentially different from the others in some respects; primarily in this, that it is based, rooted even, upon and in *sacrifice*.

The end and aim of it is the beauty which can come only from harmony, and for the sake of that harmony the artists must constantly repress themselves, hold themselves back, sacrifice themselves. In other branches of art and under other circumstances, in an annual exhibition of pictures for instance, it is perfectly legitimate, though not always desirable, to force an effect in one's own work so far that beside it juxtaposed canvases might appear weak and secondary. In the decoration of a room where there is collaboration between two or more persons, things are different, the chief desideratum in decoration being the production of a harmonious whole. If one collaborator tries to make himself conspicuous by the display of a more forcible personality than that of his fellow, he becomes dangerous—virtuosity, a quality desirable *per se*, may swell into a disturbing note. Direct rivalry, then, being

JULES GUÉRIN: Interior of the Pennsylvania Railroad Station, with men working at the decorative maps

An example of topography made decorative and used as part of a decorative ensemble

perilous, how shall we reduce its proportions with a view to obtaining a good general result?

The consideration of this difficult question may be divided into two main questions, which in turn are subject to much subdivision. The first is the problem of setting two or more painters at work in the same room. This is at once reduced to minimal proportions by the fact that few rooms are so extensive and contain so many places for important mural painting as to require more than one man to execute the latter.

But there are parts of a great building so vast and complicated that one man could not decorate them within any reasonable time. A typical example is that in which the great central dome grows upon its pendentives from piers and lower walls, and terminates in the dome-crown or lantern. Where such an example occurs, the prodigious gestation of a huge public building may compel the evolution of twins, triplets, or even a quartet of artists. In such a case twins they must be as far as possible; that is to say, men chosen because of their mutual resemblance in predisposition, aims, and methods.

To discover such yoke-fellows is pretty nearly as hard as to find the proverbial white blackbird, yet they have been found now and again, and have worked together with relative success. In the past there have been many examples of such fortunate juxtaposition (for instance, the church of Santa Maria at Saronno where Luini, Lanini, and Ferrari fill

dome and pendentives and walls with their compositions). But the art of bygone times was more of a kind than ours is. The schools which grew up by the Ilyssus and the Arno were far less confused by visions of outlying fields of endeavor than are we who are at once beneficiaries and victims of a prodigious art-inheritance. Even the Italians, for all their homogeneity, have left us in their churches and palaces many examples of what to avoid. Time, that kindest of over-painters, who uses glazes and scumbling rather than solid colors, has done much to harmonize; but in spite of him some of their juxtapositions are shocking even to-day, and when the recklessly imtemperate crowding of pictures, practised in the late sixteenth century, is added, the spectator is giddy and worse than surfeited in such churches, say, as Santa Caterina of Venice.

We in America, young and inexperienced as we are, have committed no such glaring faults of taste as are found in many Italian buildings; indeed, the painting of realistic landscapes upon piers (!) in the modern Hôtel de Ville of Paris is an innovation which has fortunately not been emulated by any American. In fact, for our own comfort we might multiply instances to show that while the heights scaled by Italian decorators may be unattainable by modern men, the depths of false taste into which the later Italians descended have not been sounded by our comparatively unsophisticated painters.

History then proves collaboration to be exacting.

What is the lesson of this? It is that, since artists are human—and we all naturally and instinctively try to show our personality—and since collaboration cannot be dispensed with in public buildings, it must be carefully considered, and so carried out that there shall be the least possible loss of individuality on the part of the collaborators, but that when all is said and done harmony *must* result.

Now, the practice of collaboration is no easy matter; human nature at once takes a hand and makes it a very difficult one. Where there are even two collaborators there is some loss of power, since each has to bend his own temperament a little toward the united purpose; if there are three, the case is still more trying; if there are ten, all have to hold themselves down, to a certain extent, to the level of the least able man in the group.

It is easy to see that so wholesale a sacrifice upon the altar of collaboration would victimize not only those offered up, but the public as well—it would result in stultification. What are we going to do to avoid it? *This*—give just as much as possible of the work within the radius of vision to one man. Such a proceeding is in large part feasible in any great building. There are, as we have said before, always many separate rooms; these can be given each to one temperament; that is to say, to one artist.

There are other places in the building which are

not really separate rooms, yet which are so subdivided into different parts by connecting corridors or vestibules that, if they were decorated by different painters, the passage from the result of one artistic temperament to that of another could be made without mental disturbance. In such portions of the building two or more men may work advantageously. Again, there are spaces so vast and having such complicated parts (I have cited a central rotunda) that it becomes impossible to give all the work to one man; he would not have time to do it properly in the period allowed by contract. In such a case the problem of distribution should be considered with reference not so much to the reputation and rank of the persons chosen as to their temperamental capacity for working together.

We artists all know that there are men with whom we can work, and others, equally good, with whom we *cannot*. There are painters whose canvases would harmonize fairly well from the start; given goodwill, the harmony could be made greater as the work advanced. On the other hand, there are those whose temperaments, as shown in their work, differ so much that we feel from the beginning the uselessness, even the danger, of yoking them.

There are men who carefully prepare their whole scheme beforehand; with them you know exactly what you are going to get. Such artists are relatively safe, but their inelasticity has to be reckoned

with. Again, we have those who also prepare an elaborate scheme, but, realizing that each problem may be a new one, make experiments and changes, and usually better their work as they proceed. Lastly, there are artists who are natural improvisators; their decoration is perforce an impromptu. Such men *may* prove most brilliant of all, but it is almost impossible for them to work with others, because, as they present no scheme beforehand, the others, and they themselves, are at a disadvantage as far as harmony goes. Where you have such a man you must give him a room to himself; then you *may* obtain a brilliant result.

When, therefore, a part of a building which cannot be given to one artist is distributed among several, I believe that the collaborators should meet, present their schemes in common, choose one of their number to be dictator as to essentials, and *obey* him. For if several men without a leader or preliminary *mutual* practice attack the dragon of difficulty together they will hamper each other; two of them will waste a stroke at the same time; they will even fall over each other. If, on the contrary, the dictator has three qualities—firmness, tact, and knowledge—the result will be satisfactory. If there is not some such leadership there are three chances to one that the decoration will not hang together and that the architect will be disheartened. Collective unwisdom has more than once unmade plans which

a little more mutual action would have brought to fruition. Wherever it is possible the painter should act directly under the architect. I, personally, should vastly prefer to do so, but if I must be part of a general scheme in which others share, and if the architect is not able to give constant and close supervision, I should like to see a director chosen and should then follow him loyally or else drop out of the scheme. And if a man have originality he can show it even while conforming to direction.

Even in *one* room where the vision is distinctly bounded by four walls, since painting is apt not to be the sole form of decoration employed, several temperaments are apt to come in contact although one be in control; and just in measure as that controller is able to control himself as well as others, just in measure as he is able to understand and consider the strong and weak points of his collaborators, will his result be fortunate.

He is having abundant trouble with his own personal equation, but it will be complicated by the working of other personal equations at his elbow—by those of the men who are designing bronze electrical fixtures, who are composing a tessellated pavement, who are setting the stained-glass windows. Sometimes neither sculpture nor painting distinctly dominates in a great room, but the two have a parity of importance as decorative elements; in such a case sculptor and painter must proceed with infinite cau-

WILLIAM LAUREL HARRIS: Example of the laying out, in the Church of St. Paul the Apostle, New York, of a decoration which is being executed in color, gold, and relief

tion and mutual consideration so as neither to harm each other nor have to put their own temperaments into strait-jackets. It is probable that building commissioners and public alike have not realized that the problem of the creation of a public building is to be approached with respect which should amount to reverence, for the successful accomplishment of such a creation sets the capstone on achievement. And this is why decoration as a disciplinary field is unsurpassed by any other in the whole range of painting.

II

All the different branches of art interlace at certain points, and all are wide apart at certain others. Mural painting differs most from its sister branches in this respect—as has been already insisted—in decoration it is not so much individuality of expression as mutual effort that is essential. There is a corollary to this statement, and a very important one, which sounds paradoxical but is true—it is only through this mutuality of effort pushed and perfected that the highest individuality of expression in decoration is attained. The Parthenon, the church of St. Francis of Assisi, the Borgia apartments of the Vatican, the Stanze of Raphael, the Anticollegio of the Ducal Palace, the halls and churches painted by Tiepolo are so individual in their effect, their forcefulness, that we have only to close our eyes

to see them standing out as landmarks of historic, æsthetic sequence.

But to the production of this individual effect have contributed a subordination and merging of the personalities, the individualities of the artists concerned, the architects, sculptors, painters, carvers, gilders, mosaic men, glass men, that can be understood fully only by him who is at once a student of history and a practitioner of decoration.

Perhaps the completest example of subordination of individuality, of mutuality of effort, may be found in the mediæval cathedral, where Guillaume and Etienne planned and built side by side, and Jean began the sculptured story which Jacques continued and Pierre finished, and Roger and Henri placed the trefoils and hexafoils of glass, and François and Blaise braided stone flowers about the capital or set the portal ablooming.

And all harmoniously, so harmoniously that they forgot themselves and were forgotten in their work. When all was done and a minster stood as the result, if we are asked who created it we have to answer: "Master So and So, John or James or William, of Chartres or Amiens or Bourges." Such a forgetfulness of names could not obtain to-day, not only because a printed record is in every one's hands, but also for many other reasons. And it is not essential or even desirable that names should be forgotten, but it *is* desirable, and it *is* essential,

that a near approach to the harmony and self-sacrifice of the cathedral-builders shall be made if we are to do first-rate decoration.

And this sacrifice must be shared by all of us. I have already once quoted the man who said to me: "The trouble with American painters is exactly the same as with the business men; they don't work hard enough." Now our artists, our architects especially, *do* work pretty hard, but perhaps even the architects do not always work hard enough at mutuality of effort with the sculptors and mural painters. This reflection, however, is a boomerang; it comes back and hits us mural painters even harder than it does the architects, for we mural painters certainly lack strenuousness in mutual effort; but it hits the architects first. They do not, except in rare cases, pay enough of their time and thought, which is the same thing as their money, to this problem of mutuality with those who work under them as decorative sculptors and painters.

It is hard to solve—this problem—but *until* it is solved we architects, painters, and sculptors shall not be solvent ourselves; in questions of decoration we shall be always on the brink of bankruptcy.

III

In discussing the problem of mutuality, let us examine somewhat the procedure which has so far

been followed by our practitioners. I have said at the beginning of this chapter that the determination of precedence is a troublesome one. To-day two artists are often set at work together in one room in a way which perhaps does more to retard the progress of true decoration than any other half-dozen hindrances. Why has this happened? Partly by reason of historical and chronological conditions which could not be helped and can be only gradually adjusted, partly, I think, by the action of architects who have not sufficiently studied the situation.

Let me try to illustrate in detail. It is probable that any architect contemplating the decoration of his building dreads the changes which his design may be forced to undergo when the sculptor and painter place their work. He, the architect, is commander-in-chief; he knows that well enough, and indicates the spots where each bit of sculpture or painting shall occur. Nevertheless he is sometimes a little nervous, and, like a wise architect whom I have known, says to himself: "For God's sake don't let's have any *features*." He very naturally does not wish to have the design of his room, as it were, warped out of shape by a mural painter who should manage to focalize all attention upon some prodigious bit of virtuosity either in color or handling. The architect's preoccupation as to this is thoroughly artistic. He is wholly right, and yet he is often the cause of his own anxiety.

He is averse to features, yet frequently has designed his room in such a way that features are the only thing which the mural painter can put there.

The architect has made a design for his room, often a very beautiful one—marble panels between pilasters or behind pillars cover the walls; and he says to the painter: "I have left a big space in such a place (lunette or rectangle, or what may be), which, it seems to me, would afford a capital chance for a mural painting."* The artist is delighted to have a panel in so beautiful a room; he paints it, and there it is, perforce, a feature! It is the one piece of figure-painting in the room; nothing of its own kind leads up to it; nothing leads away from it; elsewhere is marble, bronze, gilding; in that one spot are figures of men and women; no wonder the eye travels thither and rests too long, and thus the design of the architect is warped, as I said, out of shape. What the mural painter who has a true grasp upon his task would like is this—he would like to see the architect's sketch for the room as soon as completed, and to say to him: "Yes, I should be glad indeed to do your big panel; and in the spandrels to some of your minor arches, and here and there and elsewhere are places where I should wish to do little bits of subsidiary mural painting of figures combined

* It may be admitted that there are rooms where such focalizing of figure-work is permissible and effective, because the function peculiar to the place is also focalized by a prescribed arrangement of seats or benches, as in a throne-room or court-room for instance.

with ornament. Thus I would lead the decoration down from your big panel into your walls; I would marry the large picture to the general character of your room, and there should be a whole floreated offspring of tiny figures and patterns which should in nowise take from the simplicity of your design, but from the point of view of mural painting should unite its parts and instead of cutting it up should make it tell even more as one whole."

This is the result which the architect and the really skilful mural designer can get if they will work *together*, the architect always leading, the painter emphasizing and softening as the former desires, not merely enforcing a single focal point of personal presentation.

The conditions under which mural painting has been given out and payments have been made have had something to do with delaying the conception of the room as a whole. In every great building there is an immense amount of what is called plain painting as distinguished from mural painting. A few of the mural painters, having a large staff of men under them and a regular plant to draw upon, are able to take up great contracts, covering the painting of rooms, halls, stairways, corridors—thousands of superficial yards of wall space. Now plain painting, so-called, is much of it not plain at all, but involves knowledge of, and feeling for ornament and color; of course, anybody with muscle and a wide

brush can do plain painting of a sort, but to carry out the scheme of color of a great building in the right way demands the possession of a very high degree of artistic capacity. Some of our plain painters are also accomplished and well-known figure-painters, and the public has not appreciated the importance and difficulty of the problems which many of them have met successfully.

Now, my contention is that in putting two men together in one room our first error has been that we have not sufficiently considered the importance of this so-called plain painting. In saying this I do not mean for a moment that we have ranked the great central panel too highly; it occupies the first place in mural art—*vide* Giotto, Signorelli, Raphael, Michelangelo, Veronese, Rubens. But I do mean that we have not given a high enough place to the subsidiary painting; *vide* the work of the men who have tied the great panels together in a thousand palaces and churches of Italy.

In decoration not half enough consideration is accorded to the man to whom we give the misleading name of plain painter, the man who supplements the creator of so-called mural panels, of subjects; the man who carries out minor subjects, perhaps purely ornamental; and, above all, who determines the general color of the walls which shall harmonize the whole room. It is highly important that this man shall be an artist of first-rate excellence with

both mind and feeling; in fact, a man who by instinct and training is synthetical in a large sense. This has not been fully understood. Even recently I have heard talented figure painters, who executed fine mural panels, say: "Oh, any man can carry out the general scheme of the room." There never was a greater mistake, and few mistakes have bred more mischief. To be sure, my interlocutor, the mural painter, added, "if he is properly controlled." But proper control cannot be had without proper subordination, and the subordination which is *proper* infers sincere mutuality of effort, which latter again cannot exist until proper consideration of the plain painter by the architect and the panel-painter is obtained.

Where there is lack of consideration some blame usually attaches to those on both sides of a question. Commerciality of spirit upon the part of the plain painter has probably and justly diluted our consideration for him, for in the present phase of the evolution of decorative art he should be valuable to us just about in proportion as he is willing to subordinate his profits to a thoughtful and, therefore, costly (because time-consuming) study of the purely artistic side of his problem. But he may reasonably insist upon a large financial profit just so long as it is almost the only return which an unthinking public, and unthinking artist colleagues, admit as legitimate to him.

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ALBERT HERTER. "Europe." One of the decorations in the tapestry room of the St. Francis Hotel, San Francisco, Cal.

Frank Millet, for instance, should have been honored for some of the general schemes of coloration which he carried through great buildings with success; but so-called plain painting attracts less attention than it deserves. Now and then, when an exhibitor of easel pictures is praised highly by visitors, and in print, it may be that next door to his exhibition some great public building has just been opened. The same visitors pour through this building; they have admired the little pictures next door, and here they admire the mural panels; they do not give a thought to the plain painting, although the very fact that they do not think about it is negative praise which should redound to the credit of the artist, since nothing would be more noticeable than an unpleasant treatment of the plain painting.

The negative character of this excellence, you may say, partly explains why the plain painter is not better appreciated. But if this explains the neglect of the public, it does not justify the same neglect in the artist who should, on the other hand, note such a situation and call attention to it. I have said that some of our artists should have had more credit for their so-called plain painting. Millet's shoulders, to be sure, were bowed down with honors of every kind, offices and medals and orders of merit; but not a bit of it all came in return for the unselfish way in which he poured his thought, his time, and his private fortune into trying to per-

fect every detail, and not slight one of them in the carrying out of his general decorative schemes of color.

I, who have talked to him often and at length upon these subjects, confidant of some of his hopes and realizations and disappointments, can affirm that when we lost him in no way did we lose more than in the forfeit of the influence which he would have brought to bear upon thoroughness and sacrifice in favor of rounded perfection and the cultivation of that spirit of collaboration which only can secure such a result. Let the public, the architect, and the mural painter give to the plain painter the credit due him, and we shall find him, if he be of the right stuff, working with the painters of panels in such a way that the best shall obtain.

There is no one thing which will help us so much here in America as to arrange our harness in such cunning fashion that the handicraftsman and the creator of complicated subjects shall pull together and side by side. I do not say pull equally. More strain came upon Paul Veronese when he painted the great "Marriage of Cana" for the refectory of San Giorgio than fell upon the men who twined scroll work about it or filled ornamental panels; but the eventual strain was shared by all, and the training of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries so developed the *garzone di bottega* that Verrocchio's shopboy became da Vinci and Ghirlandajo's Michelangelo.

If we are to attain entire success the man who thinks out the big central canvas must give sustained, generous, cordial consideration to the man who paints the scrolls; for if we are to be able to spell art with a big A we must learn to spell artisan in the same way.

IV

Now, if thorough consideration for everybody's share in the work is the desideratum, how are we to bring it about? Thus far two quite different roads have been followed, each good for a certain distance, neither leading far enough. At the beginning of one road the architect has said to himself: "I am afraid of inexperience in my mural painter. I am afraid of 'features' in my room, afraid of great canvases made a theatre of display for virtuosity, and throwing my ensemble out of balance. I will adhere to the methods of the Italian fifteenth century, making such an elaborate decorative distribution of geometrical divisions of my walls and ceilings by means of carved mouldings and borders that what goes within them will pass muster, even if it be relatively inferior in drawing and painting, and at least will not confuse or contradict my design. The artist shall be prodigal of little figures flat against gold or modelled in relief, rich perhaps in color, or it may be toned into delicate distinction. By rhythm, en-

richment, and delicate interrelation of parts he shall supply the place of creative power. The lesson is spread out, for him to learn from, upon palace walls of fifteenth-century Italy, in the Schifanoja of Ferrara, the Cambio of Perugia, the Reggia of Mantua, and taught by a hundred masters, among whom Pinturicchio was really a genius, lavishing ornamental and figure composition upon his walls until their mere enrichment by color and line became fairly intoxicating."

Such a treatment is delightful as far as it goes, and it goes very far; and furthermore, it is fairly safe; for, except where artists of spontaneous and personal talent practise it, such decoration is rather compilation than creation, and calls for taste rather than originality. But it is a road which loses itself, is swallowed up, just where the great gates of the high Renaissance swing open. Within them it continues truly, but only as a delightful ornamental border-land to the spacious country in which Giorgione seats his nymphs and Veronese spreads his feasts, and over which are banked the clouds in whose bosom the goddesses of the Farnesina are throned or the angels of Correggio fly.

These later creations furnished the matter of the great panel, and the great panel came to stay. Once created, it was felt to be the completest painted expression of any dominant national emotion or happening. Events of supreme importance, when cele-

brated graphically, were no longer broken up into a series of little panels, but were given wide space upon the walls throughout the succeeding centuries. It was plain, therefore, when we commenced our decorative practice in America, that, if we wished to apotheosize some event, we must give it elbow-room; and here began our second and alternate method of procedure.

In his progress along this road the architect selected an artist to do the big panel, then a decorative firm to do the rest. Now it has been shown that, unless the architect can give a great deal of time to supervision on the spot, this dual responsibility is loaded with danger. The peril which menaces the result is increased by the architect's consciousness of it. Urged by this consciousness, he says to himself: "A has proved his ability to do a large panel well; he shall have free play. But I am not quite sure that XYZ & Co., the so-called decorative firm, will thoroughly sympathize with the character of his work; therefore I will minimize their share of it by giving them only plain or ornamented surfaces, void of figure composition and to be merely colored or gilded harmoniously." By doing this the architect ties his own hands and denies to himself freedom of distribution. The decorative *composition* of a room is of prodigious importance, and to restrict figure treatment to one enclosed space is to adopt a procrustean method. For, whether we linger with

Perugino in the minutely subdivided space or pass on with Veronese to some huge refectory, where his vast banquet fills one end of the *sala* from pavement to ceiling, we have to admit that these old masters—both the man who caressed the sequence of little panels and the one who threw open the whole room's end to his painting of the sky and the lagoons and his parti-colored crowd of Venetians—that each artist, I say, kept steadily in view the decorative ensemble, the entirety of his room. Perugino in the Sala del Cambio never thought that, because he had been lavish in quantity and quality of painted people and incidents, he could forget the carver or inlayer or gilder, and he gave to them also an honorable place. Veronese never believed that, because he had furnished a spacious scene filled with movement and color, he could abandon all the rest of his refectory to carver and inlayer and gilder, and suppress the figure save in one great panel. Each of these two masters felt that he must keep in touch with those who treated wood or plaster or pavement throughout the room, not stop at enriching one spot. So Perugino, providing a profusion of little human figures occurring again and again in all parts of his scheme, relieved the eye by giving it patterns instead of figures, to rest on in other portions of the walls. Veronese, who had set up one great focal group of dominating figures, painted others which should peer out from spandrels or between

William Morris Hunt: "The Flight of Night." Painted for the State Capitol, Albany, N. Y.

pilasters, carrying his figure composition throughout the room.

We have then seen the methods by which we have thus far tried to blunt the two horns of our dilemma, methods of elimination and restriction. One man has said: "Let us give up the big panels altogether and confine ourselves to *quattro cento* practice." The other has replied: "No, let us go on to the *cinque cento* and install the big panel, but let us keep down the second artist in the room to 'plain painting' and gilding of ornament, limiting his creative work to creation, at best, of harmonies."

Still a third man, and I am sorry to say that he is sometimes a so-called mural painter, thinks slightingly of all that does not relate to the figure, says, "Anybody can do plain painting," and wishes to be entirely rid of decorative firms as "commercial." Now some of these propositions seem to me wholly wrong, and none of them seems to me wholly right. I am optimistic and aggressive enough to believe profoundly in what is to come. Given the talent, the ability, the progressiveness shown upon the walls of our picture exhibitions by Americans, men and women, sculptors and painters, I am convinced that we may yet evolve a very high and perfect form of decoration.

In such an evolution we *must* have the great figure panel because it belongs with every advanced system of decoration, and, on the other hand, we need

not limit ourselves to a single figure panel in the room, restricting all other parts of the said room to plain surface or purely ornamental work. In fact, if we are to be highly developed we must be equal to all the different forms and degrees of decorative freedom.

Let me try to give examples of the difficulties which come up between artists set to work together in one room. We will take two men, each highly trained along his lines, and for convenience' sake call them Painter and Gilder.

An architect has included in a public building a vast room in which notable functions will occasionally take place. He wishes to have in this room a great focal decorative panel, a big painting. He allots this to Painter. There remains to be considered the decoration of the rest of the room. Instead of giving this to Painter, and enabling him to frame his own picture, he turns it over to Gilder, thus erecting two heads to the enterprise. To be sure, he says: "Gilder, I want you to refer to Painter in carrying out the decoration of the room; you are to consult him, consider his ideas, and echo his panel in the subsidiary work."

This sounds ideal, but it is not so. To begin with, the financial appropriation has been divided into two portions, controlled respectively by Painter and Gilder, neither of whom has power to exceed his allotment. They are two men, not one, and no

two men can think and plan exactly alike. They may work admirably together, but one should be in *real* control. The architect by referring Gilder to Painter has only constituted Painter an advisory committee of one, not controller. Now an advisory committee can only advise, and that is not enough.

Above all, no man can administer another man's pocketbook, and, therefore, here is what happens: Painter works at his main panel with his staff of assistants, Gilder at the general decoration with *his* staff. Painter and Gilder are carrying on decoration in other buildings, and it is difficult for them both to stay long in this particular room at the same time.

Gilder's foreman goes to Painter's studio and says: "How do you want the toning done all around your big panel?" Painter tries to tell him, but cannot do it as well as he could tell one of his own assistants, because he has trained the latter, is intimately acquainted with their temperaments, and knows just how they will interpret his orders and translate his ideas into form and color. Gilder's foreman does the work, and Painter is not really satisfied with it. The foreman says: "That is how Mr. Painter wanted it; that's what he told me to do."

But it has *not* been done as Painter wished it, because he could not superintend Gilder's staff as he might his own. They could not understand him as readily or follow him as closely as could his person-

ally trained men. It is not Gilder's fault; he is perhaps as highly trained as Painter, and is just as anxious to have things turn out well. But there is a divided responsibility where a single responsibility would have been far more effective. The result is neither a complete expression of Painter's or of Gilder's personality. On the contrary, it is complicated by a pulling which is slightly divergent in the case of the two principal parties—it is team-work without a driver.

When two men of nearly equal training are expected to refer to each other as they work, even their good qualities hinder their progress—their delicacy, personal and mutual, interferes. Each one dislikes to demand too much of the other's time. Above all, he hates to ask the other to do a piece of work over again, because in so proceeding he is putting his hand directly into the other's pocket and diminishing his profit. Gilder is paying his men a large sum per day. If, when they have worked for a week on a certain wall, Painter wishes the color to be two tones deeper, he feels like a robber in asking Gilder to undo and do again so much. He even may, and sometimes does, meet with this answer from Gilder: "You wish me to repaint the walls, but I have nothing to do it with, for I have already almost exhausted the appropriation." In such a situation what could one reply?

Suppose for a moment, and in parenthesis, that

about the year 1492 Alexander VI had given Pinturicchio a big lunette, "The Santa Caterina before the Sultan," for instance, to paint as the important focal point of the room, with an appropriation of so much money, then had turned over the rest of the Sala to another artist who proceeded to execute a series of elaborate smaller decorations about the big one! When they were all uncovered together, suppose Pinturicchio had said to his comrade, "This juxtaposition of tone and color is not what I wished; it hurts my work," and his collaborator had replied: "The Pope gave me so much money, forbidding me to exceed it, and it is nearly gone!"

How we and others before us for four hundred years should have had to suffer for this misunderstanding! How we *have* had to suffer in other cases! For they did make mistakes now and again, mistakes which we can feel and see. And if errors were made even in the relatively homogeneous art of the sixteenth century, blunders of scale apparent to-day, and, unquestionably, dissonances in color-juxtaposition which kindly time has since softened into agreement, think how much more embarrassing is our modern collaboration of men whose study has brought them into contact with so many different theories and practices!

But, on the other hand, if there is only one head to the enterprise, if Painter or Gilder alone is responsible, if it is *his* financial affair, and his alone,

he has only himself to blame for his blunder, and must at once and cheerfully make up his mind to pay for it and do the work over again; whereas, if Painter has to ask Gilder to incur loss, or *vice versa*, both are harassed with doubts as to whether the mistake might not have been avoided had the first suggestions been made effectively. But I have tried to show that they could not be made with entire effectiveness because Painter was dealing with another man's material, not his own, and could not be perfectly understood. In decoration a man knows beforehand that he is to be occasionally called upon to make sacrifices of time and money, either because of mistakes or from the need for experiment. Now he can do this very well on his own account, but when it comes to sacrificing some one else it is a different matter.

And let us further develop another cogent reason (which we have already touched upon in an earlier paragraph) for not dividing decorative responsibility. In the great room which we have discussed the architect pays to Painter so much for his panel, to Gilder so much for the general decoration. The panel occupies the principal place in the room, but there are plain spaces of wall which Painter thinks need decoration. Here and there he would like to place a figure or a frieze or a bit of spandrel ornament which should help the big panel down into the walls, marry it completely to the room, and make

FRANCIS C. JONES: Decoration in apartment of the artist

The studio and apartments of H. Bolton Jones and Francis C. Jones make up a whole remarkable as being throughout the personal creation of these artists. Not only the mural panels, but the wood-carving, gilding, ceiling-beams, stone chimneypiece, and stained glass are the work of their own hands. As a homogeneous example of richly toned decorative detail it is notable

the whole a richer, completer, and more significant ensemble. Now if the whole sum allotted to Painter and Gilder were so much, and if the entire sum were paid to one of the two as controller—to Painter, for instance—he could at once determine what fraction of the amount he would devote to such decorative figures as lay outside his panel.

If, on the other hand, one-third of the total sum were allotted to Gilder specifically for plain painting, so-called, Painter certainly could not require Gilder to do additional costly painting for nothing, nor could he afford to divert a portion of his own appropriation to work which he could not control as to its execution. Here is a condition likely seriously to hamper successful creation, since it at once narrows the scope of free combinations.

We went just now to Pinturicchio for an example; let us travel backward this time, not quite so far nor so long, to Tiepolo, and visit the wonderful Barbarossa Saal of the Castle at Würzburg. If the prince bishop had said to the great artist, "Messer Giovanni Battista, you shall paint me a ceiling and two tympana, and Mingozzi Colonna shall do everything else," how much we should have lost! What he probably did say was, "Treat such and such themes, but arrange the painting as you will," and what the painter thought was, in turn, just as probably something like this: "My ceiling

from its shape and surroundings is likely to resemble my ceilings in the Canossa palace and at Stra and elsewhere, but up there between windows and tympana I see a good place for something wholly new." And so, stimulated by the novelty of the situation, he spilled out from the corners of his tympana and spread along the wall the figures which yield perhaps the freshest, certainly the most audacious, motives in the room, and which delightfully enhance the ensemble.

All these, and the overdoors, too, we should have lost had there been dual control and a limitation of Tiepolo to his three focal points.

V

When I have spoken of our current division of responsibility to persons interested in art, they have often expressed great surprise that it should ever have occurred. They have said with emphasis: "Of *course*, the most highly trained artist should be at the head, the painter of the great panel should control the plain painter; there is no other way of looking at it." But the history of the movement shows that this dual responsibility came about quite naturally, and again, although from the ideal point of view "there is no other way" than accepting the most highly trained artist as controller, in facing the actual situation we must qualify our assurance

not a little, for though we are working toward our ideal we have not yet attained it.

Here is how the dual responsibility grew into being: Before the World's Fair at Chicago and La Farge's work in Boston and New York gave their stimulus to decorative art in the United States, the impulse toward embellishment had begun to manifest itself at least sporadically. No one (for a long time, at all events) had planned the systematic decoration of any great building, whether capitol or court-house or library, but it was evident that if such planning should be imminent the staff of creators of the decoration would have to be drawn from two classes of men. One class consisted of the artists who, either in America or Paris, had graduated from their schools to studios of their own, and were painting pictures for the annual Academy or Salon. The other class included men who had built up in American cities the business of decorative firms. They had imported and imitated antique furniture and studied styles which they applied to the interiors of private houses. The founders of these businesses often became men of highly trained artistic taste with skilled artists, artisans, and mechanics working under them. (I call them artisans for convenience' sake, and apologize in doing so, for every artisan should be an artist and every artist must be an artisan.)

There, then, was the material, and when such an

enterprise as the decoration of the Boston Public Library eventuated it was carried out by representatives of the two classes.

Mr. La Farge, the only artist who at that time was experienced in the handling of a staff of men, was engaged elsewhere. It was certain that Mr. Sargent and Mr. Abbey, from their great talent, could contribute more capacity for drawing and modelling the figure and for the conception of large compositions than could the artisan-artists employed by the firm of XYZ & Company. On the other hand, the latter could contribute a knowledge of mechanical processes, of carving or painting ornament, of toning gold, of doing a hundred things in detail which Mr. Sargent and Mr. Abbey had never found leisure to study. In such a case it was natural and desirable, at a time when we were in our beginnings as to decoration, that the architect in charge should seek out the best figure painters and say to them, "Paint me some panels"; to the decorative firms, "Do the rest of it."

Only natural and desirable, even inevitable at that time, yet such procedure was the beginning of a condition of things which I earnestly believe must now be greatly modified if we would establish a first-rate decorative practice in America. Since the year 1892 we have learned much, and there is a whole group of men who have undertaken and carried out great decorative enterprises. The Edwin

Abbey who painted the lunette called "The Treasures of the Earth," in the Harrisburg Capitol, was a much greater decorator than the Edwin Abbey who drew and colored the delightful panels of the Boston Public Library—he had had a score of years in which to think and develop. For the same reason Mr. Sargent to-day could control every detail of the surroundings to his decoration with more advantage than could any other man. If Abbey were with us still, and if he and Mr. Sargent were to decorate rooms, their added experience would make it eminently desirable that no middleman whatever should come between them and the architect, save as under their complete directoral control.

The controlling artist should not only paint the panels but also (always under the architect) administer every inch of the color of the room, determine the toning of the plaster or stone, say how much gold there should be and of what quality; in fact, he should create the frame, which is the room, as well as the panels, which, speaking superficially, we may call the picture.

To the man who wishes to eliminate decorative firms from large public artistic enterprises because the said firms are commercial, we would reply, first, that *all* artists have to earn their living, hence are in a sense themselves commercial; secondly, that some of the great decorative firms have rendered invaluable service to art in America, and have contributed prob-

ably more than any one artist toward making an artistic background for daily life in our private houses at least; thirdly, that the experience acquired by the carvers, gilders, painters of ornament, etc., in the employment of these firms can be of the very greatest possible use to artists unconnected with any such houses, but who happen for the time to be in control of great artistic enterprises. The men who are at the head of these firms, as we have said before, have attained their position because of natural inclination or inherited tendency; in some cases they are, like Mr. Tiffany, brilliant artists who have rendered great original service. Even setting aside so exceptional a case as his, such men are at least trained experts, proud of their success and eager for recognition.

Upon the purely commercial side of their business the artist who is decorating a room need not approach them. Some few among them may inject pure commerciality into all that they do. Such men should be fought to a finish and compelled to respect the professional ethics of the artistic societies. The majority of men are sound, and the majority of decorative firms, I fully believe, if given generous recognition would give generous service in return to the common cause. At all events, I should be very willing to make occasionally the experiment of being put under the yoke with such men. When I paint the principal motive in a large room while some well-known firm does the rest of the decoration, if

CHARLES R. LAMB: Dome in Memorial Chapel, Minneapolis, Minn., executed in mosaic

we make a mess of it it is because we did not begin soon enough to compare what we were doing or sufficiently consider each other's temperaments at the beginning of the undertaking.

If the mural painter can go *early* enough to the workshop of the decorative firm, and if his assistants, men who understand him and his wishes thoroughly, can go there *often* enough and be sure of a respectful hearing, we shall have a good result. Or if exactly the reverse obtains, and the head of the decorative firm comes to the painter and sends his executants to him freely and frequently, the same fortunate outcome may obtain.

You may say that it will be very difficult for several men, one the mural painter, another the so-called decorator, still others their assistants, to carry out one room successfully. Yes, it will be very difficult, it will involve mutuality of experience, knowledge, taste, above all, mutuality of sacrifice, but it will be possible, and it is the *only* way possible, and it will be worth the sacrifice. To the sceptic we will cite the condemnation passed upon our architecture but a few years ago. People said it was all copy, all taken from the past; to-day the walls of the exhibition of the Architectural League are covered with photographs of works which, evolved from the creation of the past and the needs of the present, are fresh, original, stimulating, beautiful, and *American*.

Sculpture is following closely in the wake of architecture; chronologically, painting has always come a little later than the other two, and mural painting is already standing on the threshold. She only wants to be entreated in the right way. Given sincerity and enthusiasm, which we have, mutuality, which we may have, patience, which we must have, the future will be big with event.

The very greatest result in art (in decoration as in other branches) can ultimately come only from him who has the divine afflatus, for not all the mutual effort of twenty Peruginos working conscientiously together could produce a Michelangelo. But under the commander-in-chief, be he, according to the problem, architect, sculptor, or painter, the success of the enterprise will rest upon team-work, and it is upon the training of these team-workers that we have to rely. For we must have many brains and many hands to work for us toward the creation of our building; and, to be paradoxical, the individuality of the great decorated building depends largely on homogeneousness. It is the result of minds working in a subordination at times almost hierarchical; all these minds converge upon one effect, the effect planned by the master mind of the creator, who is, or should be, the architect.

In any ideal procedure the architects, sculptors, painters, glass-makers, and all the rest constantly confer, watch each other, dovetail their work, sound

their notes together, as it were, to see if they accord. Their task is antipodal to that of the easel painter. The latter would resent a brush stroke from an outsider; he preserves his individuality as jealously as if he were a competitor *en loge*. The man who is taking a hand in the decoration of a great building acts otherwise. He may have planned a great pictured pavement like that of Siena; he cannot lay it. He may have designed a great window and sedulously calculated the effect of his leads, but he does not set the glass or fit the leads; it would be a waste of time. And so it is with the painter of a great mural panel; it would be folly for him to consume his hours in going over vast stretches of canvas with paint. Once he has found his design, his shapes, his colors, his values, his assistants may put them upon the canvas for him, and when they have reached a certain point he too plunges into the thick of the fight and works with them, elbow to elbow. And if he is wise he will associate these assistants so closely with him that their enthusiasm and their temperaments are associated as well, until they become, not merely helpers, but part creators, who in time shall grow into individual leaders.

For although fitting and soldering and all mechanical work must be well done, above these fitters of joints and between them and their leader must come many kinds of men, and above all others and close to the head must be his chosen and trained assist-

ants, his chiefs of the different departments of the staff.

For the development of these leaders we have that most sorely needed of all our art institutions, the School of Rome. Upon the top of Mount Janiculum, whence the students can look down upon a city which has been overwritten, like a palimpsest, with the records of the culture of twenty centuries, we hope to cloister a growth which, matured, shall spread over America. I believe that there is no brighter spot on the horizon, no greater encouragement for him who cares for the future of American art, no institution more deserving the indorsement, backing, and active financial assistance of all who believe in the higher education than this same School of Rome. It is there that in time we shall all seek for our assistants of the day, who shall become leaders of the morrow, for our Perino del Vaga or our Giovanni da Udine, our *garzone di bottega*, who (as I have said before), beginning as Ghirlandajo's shop-boy, became a towering master.

You smile at my thinking that Americans may emulate "the hand that rounded Peter's dome." Michelangelo did his best as a giant in a great age. If American artists learn to do their *best*, at least their relation to their time will be unimpeachable. As for our time, no less an authority than Rodin says that we in America are upon the edge of a renaissance whose importance we can hardly calculate.

To the advocate of individuality *à outrance* who says that all decoration is only compilation because it is the work of more than one hand and mind, we reply that curiously but undeniably the decorators who have had most assistants have been among the artists endowed with the most prodigious personality. Pinturicchio's Borgia rooms were produced by an army of assistants; but are they not different from any others? The ceilings of Veronese's pupils cannot always be certainly distinguished from those of the master; but do they not proclaim the names of Venice and of Paolo Cagliari as with a trumpet?

Rubens is the archetype of the man who made great pictures with other men's hands, but is any personality more colossal than that which could influence schools of north and south, could pass down the sceptre through the hands of Vandyck to Gainsborough and all sorts of lesser men, who could open the way in fact to modern art? Some later critics have spoken easily of Raphael as without personality because he accepted the ideas of others, but is there any more varied and sustained personality than Raphael's in arrangement and composition—those all-important elements of decoration?

Composition is combination; Raphael combined what he saw in men and women, books and pictures, and after they had passed through his brain they were quite sufficiently alembicated. So much for some of the famous and successful team-workers of

the past; may they not stand comparison respectably with the most individual of artists? And so in the future the successful creators of public buildings in our national architecture shall be those who have the power at once to imagine and to control themselves and others, and who shall stand fully armed with inventiveness and receptiveness in either hand.

VI

At the present moment the decorator in America, and, we may affirm, in every other country as well, has before him one problem far more immediate and troublesome than any other, the problem of finding at his hand a body of men able and willing to weave, one might say, the ornamental frame of a decorative system, while he, the master, puts on the main motive; or, in plainer English, young assistants who are capable of painting with surety, swiftness, delicacy, and vigor the ornamental forms, vegetable or animal, or simply geometrical patterns, which in all ages have surrounded, supported, and based the panels executed by the masters of the figure, whether in painting or sculpture. These panels have been usually denominated more important than the rest of the decoration, and they are so; they are more focal, and their organization is of a higher and more exacting character, but without the support furnished by the ornamentalist they would be lonely,

and the ensemble of the room would seem decoratively thin and bleak. And exactly here is to be found the weakness of the present day situation.

When Raphael designed decoratively magnificent human bodies and wanted assistants who should keep up with him as he worked, and more than keep up, indeed, in creating huge families of babies and nereids and tritons, semihuman menageries of satyrs and harpies and mermaids, and Armida's gardens of fantastic plant life, of scrolls that battled with each other, being tipped with torsos armed with club or dagger, of flowers blossoming into emergent figures; when he needed such assistants, I say, he found them ready at hand. They had come down the ages, working always at just such problems; under the eaves of Greek or Roman temples, chiselling at the cornice; setting the *tesseræ* of glass or stone in Byzantine cupolas; hacking out uncouth Romanesque monsters and braiding stone into stone. And until the sixteenth century they had been very close to the master, so close indeed that their names were exchangeable with his in the cathedrals of the north. But with Raphael and his contemporaries the master began to tower and to specialize, while followed and surrounded by scores of pupils. More and more his part of the decoration began to be of paramount interest to the client; more and more the framing became a mere matter of course, a compilation, a heaping together

by men who now had within easy reach such an exhaustless cornucopia of material invented in a more creative past that they had only to dip careless hands into the medley and apply what they brought out with more or less of taste. And it soon became less rather than more. Even so early as with the Caracci, although there still remained enough of the *grand souffle* to remind us of the robust health of a more serene time, there began a heaping up of motive which cloyed and irritated even where it amused.

Take, for instance, Annibale's Jupiter and Juno in his famous series in Jacopo della Porta's great gallery of Paul III's palace. The goddess is still delightful, in a sort of post-Farnesina fashion, but the Olympian couple has to be surrounded by graduated giants, heroic, academic, of all sizes, and pushing themselves into every possible coign of vantage, as if the artist had said: "Only see how I can draw muscles and vary postures, and just realize how clever I am at squeezing in more and more figures."

This facile cleverness increased at the expense of seriousness. With Annibale Caracci there remained still much of the grand style, but already the separation was widening between the master who made carefully considered studies for his figures and the man who composed frames for the same.

And it widened more and more. Ghirlandajo's

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JOSEPH LAUBER: "The Pilgrimage of Life." Window in the First Congregational Church, Montclair, N. J.

garzone di bottega took from his master's hands the drawings for figures and painted them under the master's eyes on some chest front or cupboard panels, where the master himself retouched them. Here, then, was a carved wood sofa, made throughout in Ghirlandajo's shop, by himself and young assistants, who might afterwards become famous painters and sculptors. But later, as the years went on, the ornamentalist moved his shop to the other side of the way and sold his own sofas, and if he became a master, he was a master of sofas and chairs, and designs for chintz bed-hangings and boudoirs. And all this was admirable *except* the separation. To the new development we owe the Adams and Chippendales, and the hundred French masters of dainty decorative detail, for if the great rooms of Fontainebleau were unreproducible, elegance had become almost universal in the palaces of eighteenth-century France, and the Galerie d'Apollon, for instance, is a superb example of decoration created, in part at least, in very late times indeed.

But a line of purely artificial cleavage had been created between so-called artist and so-called artisan—as if a man who loved and felt line and mass, style, and color, could ever be anything *but* an artist. Every branch of art was still respected; but in 1780 the engravers on copper who frequented the apartment of Madame Roland's father were a good deal

further removed from the *premier architecte du roi* than was Cellini from Michelangelo. And if such separation existed in a great art centre in 1780, by 1860 and in America there was practically extinction of one end of the line, for, as we have said before, in "mediæval New York" the fresco-painter lived in the vestibule between front door and storm-door from the beginning to the end of his career.

And now after this decline of the artist-artisan, we have to get back again somewhere near to the situation as it was in the best days of decoration. For several years we have been on the upward trend; highly skilled artisan-artists are now to be found in America in the employment of decorative firms whose names are a credit to our country, and are known abroad as well as at home. But these artisans are not accessible to our individual painters unless their commission happens to come through some particular business house. A few, a very few, men have been struggling valiantly and successfully at general interior schemes of decoration, and have been creating little bands of skilled assistants of their own. But there are not enough of these to go around, and here is the crying need of decorative art in America.

As soon as a large body of truly accomplished ornamentalists has been created, just so soon will such figure-painters as are by temperament and training true designers, be able to handle currently

important decorative schemes. We have a few now who can do so, but we should have many. When a dozen cities at a time inaugurate such schemes as they will by and by, then fifty designers and five hundred ornamentalists will have their hands full. And it seems as if this problem were at last to find its solution through the initiation of the Society of Beaux Arts Architects, and as if the capstone would be set upon this achievement by the institution of the American Academy of Fine Arts in Rome.

The Beaux Arts Architects have with extraordinary enthusiasm, replied to by extraordinary success, set on foot an "Atelier System" of competitions through which beginners in architectural design shall be trained; the National Sculpture Society and the Society of Mural Painters are following suit; and to the flower of the young men thus trained, the Academy of Rome opens its competitions and fellowships, offering the opportunity of three years of harmonious, united collaboration between architect, sculptor, and painter, in the city which can unroll before their eyes the most uninterrupted succession of masterpieces.

Here surely at last will be the corpus of trained material which shall permit each artist, under the architect, wholly to carry out his scheme—not conduct it a certain distance only to place it in the hands of another who shall piece it out. Thus at

last each man will be able to solve his own problem, keeping in respectful consideration the problem of the man at his elbow, and not infringing; but being forever freed from the necessity of accepting responsibility from any one save from him who is distinctly his ranking officer. And finally, through this development, the man who has had nothing but his personal equipment to count upon can find a collateral equipment made to his hand, ready to be used by and under him. Mutuality of comprehension and effort will still be infinitely helpful, because one man's area of work will border another's, but dual control will cease; and when A has painted his panel he will not be obliged to hand it over to B to give it a background, but will himself control clever hands, which shall surround it with its definitive setting.

A few men have already learned to control each his own staff of artisans. To them we must be grateful indeed for what they have done, and to them we must confidently appeal for help to widen the circle. And they will not lose by such promoting of knowledge; they will gain, for with acquired surety of greater excellence will come greater confidence on the part of the architects and such a widening of the field of opportunity as we do not yet realize. For indeed if this field is rightly cultivated, no one to-day can foresee how great its yield may be. We have almost unlimited territory, almost unlimited

Will H. Low: "The Garden of Diane." Central panel decoration in reception hall of the residence of the late Anthony N. Brady, Albany, N. Y.

Example of decoration applied to private residences

wealth, and there surely has been no such opportunity since the Renaissance.

This chapter upon Mutuality has been necessarily long and complicated by so much explanatory detail that a short résumé of desiderata seems necessary. These reduced to their lowest terms would seem to be: First, that *one* painter (under the architect) should be in actual not nominal control of the coloring of the room and of the sum of money appropriated to execute the same; and that he should be responsible for the result. It might be Mr. Painter or it might be Mr. Gilder, but he should control, and he should be responsible for the result.

Second, that *as soon as* the architect's drawing is done, the painter (and sculptor too) should see it and decide (under the architect) just how much or how little, how rich or how severe, mural painting and sculpture should be placed upon the walls.

Third, that all having been planned as far as possible at the inception of the work, in the carrying out of the latter the architect should insist that the painter keep in close and constant touch with all his collaborators in the room, whether practitioners of the major or the minor arts.

VII

SIGNIFICANCE IN MURAL PAINTING

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SIGNIFICANCE IN MURAL PAINTING

I

A CONSIDERATION of the first importance in mural painting is subject, or what I should prefer to call significance. And here at once we have to break a lance with those who make the usual attack in their catch-phrase: "Art for art's sake." Good art is always art for its own sake, and often for the sake of much beside. If you begin to value it for its *limitations*, you are in danger. Cloistered growth is precious, but once matured let it come forth and spread and climb and cover the cathedral front.

It is true that in a decoration, pattern should appeal first of all—pattern and color and style—and to some extent this applies to every good picture, decoration or not. The sensitive observer quite forgets subject in undergoing the first delightful shock of a beautiful piece of work. Indeed, I will go so far as to say that a decoration is not thoroughly good unless it would look well upside down just as pattern; but besides having pattern, color, style, the decoration in a building which belongs to the public

must speak to the people—to the man in the street. It *must* embody thought and significance, and that so plainly that he who runs may read.

Literary art is a bogie phrase. The oft-quoted Frith's "Railway Station" or "Derby Day" is not literary art, but trivial incident rather. To the world and in the past the art which we call literary has been the art of the ages telling stories to a series of listening generations, of heathen myth and Christian legend; of Greek masters showing how Theseus quarrelled with the centaurs at supper; of Botticelli and his pupils rehearsing the tales of Lucian or Boccaccio; of Raphael telling Bible stories in woven silk; of Michelangelo unrolling upon the Sistine vaulting, to the accompaniment of the thunder and lightning of his own mighty inspiration, the whole story of man's birth and fall and redemption.

It is true that these were not new stories; the spectator was acquainted with them already so that he could pay due attention to painting and drawing and modelling. He was not entangled by the complicated or set guessing by the recondite, and he was able to give his thought as much to the manner as to the matter. But they *were* stories, graphic presentations of traditions which lay close to the roots of the race, memories of storms which had rocked its cradle, milestones and millennial-stones of its evolution. The very fact that all this story was familiar proved how man had clung to the tell-

Copyright, 1910, by Fred Dana Marsh

FRED DANA MARSH: "Engineering." Mural painting for the library of the Engineering Societies, New York City

ing. The opponent of so-called literary art will have a bad time to-day if he will honestly consider his position in detail. What is Greek vase-painting? Story-telling. What do the walls of Egypt tell us? The same stories of a hundred deities ten thousand times repeated. What is the graphic art of the Roman Empire? The story of the divinized commonwealth and of the imperial houses. What were the beautifully simple and prototypically artistic frescoes of the Italian *trecento?* Stories, stories, stories! It was as dramaturgist that Giotto leaped at a bound into the heart of the century, and so affirmed himself there that for a hundred years no one could succeed him. With Giotto, Madonna and the Baby, St. Joseph and the Angels, and the rest ceased to be merely beautiful decorative spots on the walls, and the delighted spectator, instead of taking them upon faith as traditions only, could actually make out what they were doing!

What are the frescoes of the fifteenth century? Stories, incidentally stuffed with portraits. What the great canvases of the Venetians? Stories, intertwisted, Biblical and mythological. What the cycles of Tintoretto? Stories which are often poems (and if you say to me that Tintoretto is loveliest when a lyric poet, I answer: granted, but he is epic in most of his work). What is Rembrandt? A dreamer of dreams. Rubens? A rehearser of pageants. They are story-tellers, both of them.

Say, if you will, that there is no art but portrait or landscape painting—that at least is a position; but if you are not careful, and if you begin to study the character of your sitter or the character of nature, there you are again upon the edge of story-telling. In fact, you can no more draw a line between literary and non-literary art than you can make a rule for the imitation or non-imitation of nature. Indeed, it would seem rather that we have not told our story intensely enough. It is, perhaps, more the superficiality of our speech than its literary quality that weakens it.

The distinctions which the purist makes are curiously indicative of his bias. If we are shown a drawing by Millet of a girl in a pool of water, the purist accepts it at once as artistic, not literary; if Rembrandt has called a nude figure Bathsheba, that passes also as tolerable in a remote seventeenth century; but if you adopt the same label to-day it would be, in the opinion of many, an undignified concession. And indeed it probably *would* be undignified because perfunctorily and carelessly chosen. If the water in Rembrandt's pools of Siloam or Bethesda, or what not, came out of Dutch canals, Rembrandt's *feeling* was saturated with the sense of Holy Writ, whereas a man painting for the Salon to-day would name his Bathsheba thoughtlessly, and might probably find a more fitting title. And this helps my contention instead of hurting it, for truly

I believe that we are too little rather than too much concerned with significance.

But whatever we may think about the easel picture there is no room for doubt regarding the mural decoration of a public building. A public decoration is sure to be in part, at any rate, a commemoration; in the public building the community celebrates itself and is preached to; meaning it wants, and meaning of the highest. If the commissioners of a State capitol came to a mural painter it would be preposterous for him to say to them: "Beauty is all that you require in your rooms—beauty of pattern and line, color and figures." They would reply: "We have suffered and fought in the cause of progress and civilization; remind us of it upon our walls. We have bred heroes; celebrate them."

When I received a commission to paint in the new court-house of Baltimore, several gentlemen in that city invited me to dine with them to consider the subject to be undertaken, and I was impressed by the variety and importance of their souvenirs. One recalled his grandfather's revolutionary memories; a second had sat by Peter Cooper during the first railway ride made in America; a third, President Gilman, of Johns Hopkins, said: "I have seen three of the greatest living European scientists literally on their knees before the lines ruled upon glass by one of our professors." So they went on telling of one and another achievement meet for celebration,

and finally decided that the resignation of his commission as commander-in-chief by Washington at Annapolis was their "great central act of equity," best worth commemorating in the history of Maryland. Not every State has so deep and so full a background as that historic commonwealth; nevertheless, wherever the decorator might go, up and down these United States, he would find something to commemorate. We have to celebrate the conquest of a continent by the plough. Our great internecine quarrel has been gloriously rounded by reconciliation into a subject for commemoration by both North and South. We can tell upon our walls of invention, achievement, growth of many kinds. We have enough to relate to justify study of all the methods of pictorial commemoration in the past, and I am convinced that methods, new to some extent, modified certainly, will be found to meet new needs.

II

Artists naturally vary in their bias, their sympathies, but if they will attentively study the question of the decoration of public buildings, they will find it an astonishingly inclusive one, and discover that nearly every form of art may contribute to the evolution of a national or municipal monument.

Probably the masters of the Italian Renaissance, who studied both antiquity and the *trecento*, have

prescribed to all time the decorative formula for some of the most important and what we may perhaps call most architectural parts of a public building. It is a formula within which wide liberty is possible, as wide indeed as is the gamut run from Giotto through Masaccio to Raphael, even to Veronese and his late descendant Tiepolo. It is the kind of art, the system if you will, which is accountable for such things as Raphael's "Jurisprudence," Michelangelo's "Sibyls and Prophets," for those arrangements which are apt to be symbolical and are certain to be architectonic. It is the form of decoration which Mr. Kenyon Cox has so illuminatingly advocated in his book on the classic spirit.

Although I enthusiastically follow Mr. Cox in his love for this side of art, I believe that a more vivid and appealing form will be that which directly celebrates the happenings and the people of the city, county, or State for which the building stands. This is only natural and human, and the more our appeal is directed toward this humanity the sooner will decoration strike deep root in America.

Our native schools of art have produced talent of a high order devoted to portrait and landscape; but it has not yet been recognized, because so little really serious consideration has been given to a definition of mural painting that the latter should include within its scope both the portrait and the landscape. We have mentioned in a foregoing pas-

sage a decorated room which was spoiled by the introduction of portraits. It was the improper method of their introduction which did the mischief. Portraits properly introduced should be among the most valuable assets of the architect and painter. Historic celebration, whether local or national, imposes them, and they are intrinsically dignified. A hall of portraits where the latter are suitably panelled into handsome walls should be an indispensable adjunct of every great public building, but to box these portraits into heavy frames and scatter them about is utterly to misunderstand their decorative purpose and availability. To see how admirably portraiture can be combined with pictorial and sculptural decoration of an ideal or symbolic character we have only to enter the *Galerie d'Apollon* of the Louvre, one of the most beautiful rooms in the world, and equally dependent upon many different elements of beauty.

From the comprehension of the use of the portrait in decoration to the use of landscape is only another step. Celebration of the beauty of our national or local scenery in State capitols and town halls is as suitable as celebration of men and actions. In the sixteenth century we find wall-pictures of Tuscan cities painted at the initiative of a Medici, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries famous towns and ports of France appear upon the walls by royal order. To-day you may see many

George W. Maynard: Ceiling, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
Example of the use of decorative figures and pure ornament in nearly equal proportions

mural paintings of like character in the council-houses of Germany, and they are peculiarly fitted to the great railway stations and post-offices.

Not very many years ago in America a feeling existed that the success of the mural painter was somewhat antagonistic to that of the genre-painter, the landscape-painter, the portrait-painter. Other artists sometimes felt that the mural painter covered space which might well be given to works of minor size. It has since been realized that there never was a more complete mistake, for it is unlikely that one square yard of wall surface has been taken by the mural painter from his comrades who practise other branches of art. Commercialism *has* again and again taken such walls and covered them with costly textiles or marbles, but it would be difficult to find a case where there has been an important sacrifice to mural painting. We shall do well to recognize as soon as possible that the *wall* is the natural place for painting, and that painting is of all things the most appropriate decoration for a wall, because it is of all systems of decoration the most easily varied and the most susceptible of a high development. A painting is not a thing to be fastened on a hat or worn like a sword-hilt. It is a fixed and permanent ornament, and the only argument in favor of hanging it up in little boxes in our private houses is that in our young civilization we change even our walls very often. Where the wall is

to be reasonably permanent, as in our public buildings, there it should be planned for the painting, and the painting planned for *it*, so that landscape-painter and portrait-painter may become mural painters side by side with those who now bear that especial designation and are members of that special guild.

For thousands of years all painting was mural, and when the artist executed any other sort of pictorial work it was solely and wholly because he wished it to be easily transportable. From Giotto to Giorgione, the Italian masters painted little panels for chest-fronts or cupboards, and others which set under gilded Gothic canopies and pinnacles or between Renaissance pilasters could be easily moved about from oratory to bedhead. But the large altar-piece, even if for convenience it were executed on panel in the studio, once carried to church or chapel was firmly fastened to its definitive place, and became almost as much a part of the wall as if it were a fresco, while its projecting frame of carved wood or marble, the only thing about the altar-piece which in any way differentiated it from an out-and-out mural painting, was carefully planned and designed to fit its place and harmonize with its surroundings.

The picture-gallery is an established modern institution; of that there is no doubt, and it will endure. Nevertheless, it points the moral which I am trying

to enforce. Witness the action of the harassed member of a hanging committee who does his utmost to get away from the cancelling effect of crowded juxtaposition and tries his best to space his pictures and compose them decoratively. In other words, he endeavors by the distribution and composition of his sizes, shapes, tones, and colors to make his wall as much as possible like one which an architect would consider a decorative element of a great room. Such action is enough to prove my point, and it is certain that landscape and portrait can find their place, and to their own great advantage, in a highly developed system of decoration.

Certain catch-phrases are frequently used by those who would argue for or against changes. One of these is: "You must keep your wall flat." It is not unlikely that some one might employ it in disputing my proposition, saying, "If you are going to paint landscapes and portraits, do you not run the risk of making holes in your wall? Would you not be compelled to adopt a certain decorative treatment in your landscapes?" To this the reply is that all art is a convention, and that no matter what you paint you have to take into consideration conditions of one kind or another. If you go out-of-doors and paint a dozen different landscapes, looked at ever so objectively, you would be confronted by certain new conditions the moment you brought your canvases into the house, and, governed by these, you

would seek the best light to place them in, the best color and tone of background to set them against. If such is the case, why not go further if you have a room to decorate with landscapes and deliberately accord to them something of the so-called decorative treatment? The figure-painter often wears chains of this kind with advantage; if so, may not the landscape-painter as well? As for the portrait, properly panelled into the right sort of wall covering, it would look well almost anywhere. Flatness is called decorative; yet it is not always the highest of decorative qualities. Melozzo da Forlì's portrait of Platina in the Vatican offers an ideal example of decorative flatness, yet Velasquez's "Innocent Tenth" (which is not at all flat) panelled into good woodwork or the right kind of marble would make a still better decoration.

In a word, there is no objection to having a spot on your wall provided you build up to it gradually or lead the eye away from it so gently that it forgets to note it *as* a spot.

III

A hundred of the greatest masters in the past have believed in significance and wrought it into their work, and a thousand other lesser masters have followed in their footsteps.

Is it to be reserved for Americans to declare that,

like the prince in "Much Ado about Nothing," we are too fine for daily wear of significance? If the high thinkers are to espouse and accept for lord and master only the art which eschews significance as too disturbing, will not the rest of us, the great public, like Beatrice in the play, be obliged "to have another husband for working-days"? May not some one in the future suggest that we were rather too threadbare than too fine for daily wear, and that what compelled our lack of significance was just simply poverty of invention?

Some such suspicion might be born and disturb us both as artists and patriotic Americans were it not dissipated absolutely by one really comprehensive glance over the field of American art. Right at the side of our painters and at least abreast of them stand the American illustrators, at once virile and significant in their art. If the illustrators can compass this double forcibleness, cannot the painters learn to do it? Is there anything in color to make it an inevitable solvent of such a bond? To me there are few things more preposterous, or more hurtful to American art, than the imaginary line of cleavage which has been established between the illustrator and the easel painter and between them both and the mural painter.

To each of the three branches of art certain rules of technical procedure are special, but if I may be allowed to pun upon words these are only the twigs

upon the branches; the vital sap is in their message to the world, and significance belongs to all of the three alike and may not be forfeited by one of them save at grave cost. If an enlightened foreigner came to America to weigh our art I would take him to the illustrators, with pride in the fact that in them he would find full measure of all-round capacity based upon well-laid foundations, a rich and varied technic, a mastery of means which had not been paid for by any lack of significance.

The easel painters and mural painters and illustrators need each other; especially do the two former classes need the latter; the gradual infiltration of fundamental ideas from one class into another would be infinitely helpful to American art, and would bring about the constitution of exhibitions in regard to which the critic could no longer say: "Here is skill without originality; here is brilliancy without invention."

The more one thinks of it the more one is astonished that meaning, so delightful to-day in illustration, so delightful four hundred years ago in fresco and painting, should now be taboo before the gatekeeper of an exhibition of current art work.

Some one may say: if it is valuable, how does it happen that subject, so called, has disappeared from art? The answer is that it has not and never *has* disappeared from art save in America. The French, inheritors of the traditions of Greek and Italian art,

Copyright by Francis Davis Millet

FRANCIS DAVIS MILLET: "Paying for the Land, January 30, 1658." Decoration of rotunda, Hudson County Court-House, Jersey City

Example showing foliage of trees as one of the main motives

and *our* masters in modern teaching, have been singularly sane and catholic until very lately. They have gone on painting subjects of any and every kind that have attracted them, for before everything they have been tolerant. In the last two decades this tolerance has extended to technic and has become laxity. So tolerant, indeed, they have been that just as during the later empire all the deities of the world were worshipped in Rome, so in Paris the air has been filled with theories until singleness of purpose has been stifled and practice has been deeply overlaid with so much novelty, imported or invented, that at last this novelty could no longer be assimilated and acute indigestion ensued. Art was auto-intoxicated. Some day the vermiform appendix of universal license will be extracted and the remembrance that all art is a convention will soothe it back into health. But we must not impute this overtoleration to catholicity as to subject, for *nota bene* it has not been subject or variety of subject that has created this disturbance; it has been theory of presentation.

The French, as I have said, never troubled themselves to banish subject. In England and Germany, especially in the former, a natural reaction followed a period of cheap sentimentalism or frozen classicism. The primitive painters, Italian or Flemish, crowded into one panel or canvas repeated action by the same personages: in one corner the saint was

baptized, in the middle he performed miracles, in the other corner he was beheaded, and above he was received into heaven. A somewhat similar naïveté in the middle of the nineteenth century selected all the most entertaining events that could come about in a railway station, for instance, and crowded them into one canvas. So in battle-pieces each character was occupied by taking part in its own little episode instead of being absorbed by the consciousness of an enemy to be shot at or shot by. This art in which too much happened was easy to ridicule, and was followed by that of the pre-Raphaelites who held fast to incident but tried to cast it in poetic form.

Then came the vogue of the great Velasquez with the wise and witty sayings of his apostle Whistler. In his grave and lofty symphony of black and white and gray, Velasquez suppressed the negligible, and Whistler, whose joy was mystification, held up eschewal as almost *the* cardinal virtue. A handle for ridicule he could find easily, and he stuck so many of his friends and foes alike full of barbed shafts that they were afraid to express any opinion save that to leave out things was to keep within the narrow road to perfection. This is a dangerous credo, or rather lack of belief; it is almost as hard to leave out things intelligently as to put them in intelligently; skilful elimination and deliberate omission are quite different things. Undue attention to subject will hurt an artist just as undue atten-

tion to anatomy—I mean overemphasized anatomy, or any other research pushed to excess—will interfere with the effect of his picture as an ensemble. But proper consideration at one time or another is due to every element of art.

Probably our best excuse in America for neglect of subject has been that here in our young new school, where so much time had perforce to be given to purely technical considerations of line, mass, color, and tone, some of that same time might be gained by suppression of the consideration of significance. This was, perhaps, a not unnatural contention on the part of the student, and may have been for a while even a helpful one. But we have passed far beyond the need of such contention now. American art in its landscapes and portraits is in full possession of a highly developed technic, and the time is ripe for a rounded school which cannot be complete without the thorough grasp upon significance which has belonged to every school in the past.

If significance is a desideratum in the school at large, to the mural painter it is an essential. He must realize once for all that he is both celebrant and recorder. He must possess significance; his clients demand it, and he must find the proper place for it, that is to say, must consider not only the character but the distribution of his subjects. What is suitable for one place in the building is eminently un-

fitting for another. There are pendentives, friezes, spandrels, over-doors, and many other kinds of spaces. Certain of these, especially those which are unusual in shape, such as spandrels or over-doors, will require special treatment, and what one may call essentially decorative figures, while historical subjects will demand the more commonplace shapes of rectangular panels, or, at any rate, spaces upon such portions of the walls as are not notably architectural, that is to say, constructional.

To the true decorator the circumscribing lines of any wall or ceiling space cry aloud announcing their own peculiar decorative needs, and it is at once his serious consideration and his great pleasure so to compose his lines and masses within such wall spaces that they shall re-echo the framing and in a delicate way repeat some of the important lines of the architectural ornament which lies about or near them. Of this particular kind of composition Raphael was one of the supreme masters, and generations of artists have trodden more or less assuredly in his footsteps.

To certain limitations the mural painter must make up his mind once for all; he may stretch them occasionally with advantage, but not burst them. The necessity for making an axial composition again and again imposes heavy drafts upon the painter's inventiveness, and he must be a resourceful man who meets them repeatedly without becoming

monotonous. The decorator often feels that he could breathe more easily if he might deviate from this axial arrangement and adopt a freer composition—and he may do so in his minor lunettes or panels, but when he comes to the focal decoration at the head, say, of some great room, the architect knows that the decoration must be axial, that the mind must be carried through the eye just as directly up the centre of his room as is the crank through the hull of an ocean liner.

In such spaces then as we are accustomed to consider essentially architectural—spandrels, depressed lunettes, friezes—we think of architectonic arrangement, of crouching or bending figures or processional people marching along under the cornice, but by and by the commissioners say: "Now, let us have as central motive for our room something from the history of the county, the famous trial of A, the celebrated speech of B in court, or the signing of such and such a famous act." The decorator is naturally disconcerted by this kind of subject because it is made up of what one may call undecorative quantities—groups of people dressed much in the same way, and all standing or sitting much in the same attitude listening to the trial or speech. On the other hand, the commissioner is quite as naturally interested in such subjects; they are the stuff of which his county's history is made, and he is entitled to his painted souvenir. If the scene have

only ever so little of the dramatic in it we can, with a good heart, put it upon one of the big rectangular wall panels; we can always have Gettysburgs and Bunker Hills and battles of Lake Erie on such surfaces; but when it comes to the presentation of homely detail and quiet groups of listening figures, the artist's task becomes more difficult. Sometimes the light can be made so decorative a factor that it turns the subject's commonplaceness into romance, as in Robert Reid's admirably conceived "Speech of Otis" in the Boston State House, or again some realistic detail may be ingeniously and decoratively insisted upon, as in the famous Velasquez of the Prado. The latter is one of the realistic subjects which can be called truly decorative, and it is made so largely by the reduplication of a great number of parallel spears which give to the picture its name of "The Lances of Breda."

But even if the realistic subject be troublesome to treat, I repeat here, with emphasis, what I have said before, that the sooner we learn to celebrate decoratively the happenings of our own time and people, the sooner our decorative painting will become firmly rooted. We may be a little misled in our consideration of ancient art; when we affirm that it is more often idealistic than realistic, we perhaps slight the latter side of it. The remote and quaint are always, to a certain extent, synonymous, and for that reason we are apt to class certain figures and

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H. Siddons Mowbray: Decoration in the University Club Library, New York City

Example of a combination of personal and original work of the artist with a fifteenth-century treatment of detail, the whole adapted to the modern need

costumes as idealistic, which to their creators came much nearer to being realistic than we suppose. Our point of view has changed. The old masters were closer to their public than we are. To-day a nymph is further from our daily custom (and costume!) than she was from that of Renaissance Florence. If we paint her in bathing-dress she will seem rather an advertisement for Atlantic City than something which has stepped out of contemporaneous poetry, but Botticelli's Virtues, or Beatitudes, or Bacchants might illustrate Poliziano's verses, and yet wear gowns very little removed from those in which the Florentine girls shopped upon the Ponte Vecchio.

It may be said: "Ah, yes, they went picturesquely garbed, we are unpicturesque." I do not think that is quite enough to excuse us. It is true that far distant music has a charm of its own; one hopes that the "Song of Salamis" will always stir us, but "John Brown's Body" and "Dixie" are stirring, too, and in either case it is the splendid connotation that appeals, whether from Greece or from our own battlefields. I admit that in their electrical lines of fire the chariot and horses of the Herald Square advertisement give me more pleasure than a colossal siphon squirting sparks into an illuminated tumbler of simulated whiskey. I admit that the average boat, beautiful as it may be in line, is not quite so gorgeously picturesque as the Viking's ship with

its shields arow, its painted eyes and its dragon-head. But properly treated, the contemporaneous thing may astonish us by its decorative quality. Everything fitted to do its work has style of a kind. To the mediæval man Scripture was so familiar that certain scenes were recognizable even when mere vague spots of color or black and white; they became real hieroglyphs. To-day the student of Italian art knows them from far off, seen ever so hurriedly, and says to himself as he passes some distant blur upon a wall, "Annunciation" or "Flight into Egypt" or "Adoration of the Magi." Now it is the locomotive or aeroplane or ocean liner that the crowd recognize, no matter how distant, upon the advertisement. But these things may have their decorative quality: locomotives, Mrs. Browning's "Steam-eagles," aeroplanes even more, may become finely suggestive. One illustrator may be required to present a battle-ship so baldly that every plate and rivet shall be seen in place, but the next one may be permitted to generalize till he shows us the impressive shadowy thing which towered up in a panel upon the wall of one of the exhibitions of the Architectural League; and so, given enough power in the modern artist, we may finally be compelled by him, in looking at his spirited figures, to conclude that the cowboy's yell is as exciting in its own way as the "terrible *Juch hei saa* of the Vikings."

"Nature is brimful of style, 'search and ye shall

find,' was written in the Scriptures for us painters," said Bonnat once to me in Paris. And we *must* find the style and decorative interest in the contemporary man, woman, and child; there is plenty of it. Only look at our street-babies dancing to the hand-organ, or playing in the flickering light of flaring gas torches in the evening where workmen are building or repairing! Women and children indeed, especially to-day when feminine costume is still picturesque, are so much more decorative as a factor than most contemporary men that the artist hates to leave them out of his canvas, and when he has men only, he is reduced to such straits in making the sad-colored modern trousers tolerable that he execrates the memory of the first *sans culotte*. Our modern workman, however, can become as decorative a factor as the craftsman of the Renaissance. The trousers, strained by action until they take folds and pleats that emphasize muscular effort, are quite different from the fresh-from-the-tailor article, and when strapped in at the ankle make, in combination with the flannel shirt, a costume admirably adapted to artistic treatment. The tailor-made man taking part in a social function, however ceremonious, unless he wears a uniform, is truly a problem to the artist, because it has been the tailor's first business to keep him fashionably conventional, so that he soon ceases to interest, save when he is treated as a portrait and by a clever painter.

But it is the clever, the inventive painter only, whom we need as decorator. If he is clever enough he will compel interest even in the most prosaic of happenings. The men of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance had often and again to solve the problem of making a commonplace subject decorative, and they did it with æsthetic tact if one may name it so. The Venetians signed plenty of treaties, and celebrated the same in pictured panels, but above the realistic men prosaically grouped, pen in hand, about a table, were seen Venice and her attendant goddesses throned upon clouds, watching the proceeding, and compositionally connected with it by some doge or senator who, looking upward toward the divinized commonwealth, points at the signers. The old masters led their action upward and onward from the real into the ideal. It is easy to find fault with their moral *donnée* at times, when they apotheosize some scoundrel or weakling, some late Medici or later Louis XV, for instance, but there is nothing wrong in their decorative intuition.

I say again that we must be modern, and we must be American. No matter how saturated we are with the art of the past, and the more the better, we must fasten our souvenir to the living present; no matter how much we love the pale ideal landscape of the primitive painters, or the noble, spacious, mythological fairy-land of Poussin, the glory of Claude's sunsets, *we* must use our memory of them as frame

to some such happenings as live for Americans of to-day. No matter how enthusiastically we have studied the nude body, as presented in the broken fragments from Greek pediments or the marbles of Michelangelo, the muscles of Raphael's tritons and nymphs, the glowing canvases of Venice, the bronzes of Donatello, we must remember that naked bodies bow themselves to dig *our* trenches and puddle *our* steel, work among *us* to-day, and are as interesting now under the American sun or in the firelight of our foundries as they were in times when early Italian masters said: "What a divine thing is this *anatomy!*" *

It is then of the utmost importance that our artists learn to treat decoratively the marking events of our history, past or contemporaneous, of our Puritans and Dutch, our Revolutionary heroes, our Argonauts of '49, our pioneers and colonizers and soldiers of the Civil War, our inventors and organizers, our men in the streets and in the fields of to-day; and special kinds of celebration should find place in particularly suited portions of our public buildings.

For if we are asked, "In including realistic celebration of the chronicle, do you mean to leave out what is called ideal art, the sort of art which Raphael practised in the Segnatura, Veronese in the Col-

* To be exact, it was the divinity of *la Perspettiva* that Uccello celebrated, but his contemporaries worshipped anatomy just as devoutly.

legio?" the answer is that that kind of art, if we can learn to practise it—and we may, since other modern men have done so—is the crowning glory of decoration, and should find its place at the very core and centre of a public building. For a certain form of distribution is indicated, prescribed almost, in the practice of the past, and will be in the future. Figures removed from those which we meet habitually, by their generalization into something more beautiful, more robust, more simple than is the daily habit of humanity, have always been the glory of decorative painting. And wherever painting was of necessity most closely bound to architecture, there such figures found their logical place.

At the side of the mathematics and the music of the architect, giving figurative expression to his geometry and measurements, his knowledge of weight and thrust and resistance, stood the symbolic figures, half human, half mechanical, the caryatides of art, the space-fillers, the people whose business it is to bow themselves under weight, to fit themselves into angles, to recline in more and more developed recumbency as the pediment slopes and narrows to its corner. Such figures, also, we must always have in art in their predestined place as the so-called ideal figures, as much needed as the real, as complementary and inevitable as sea to shore or heaven to earth. Michelangelo and Raphael, Veronese and Correggio understood this well, and could not have

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VIOLET OAKLEY: "Penn's Vision." From a series of panels in the Governor's room of the Pennsylvania State Capitol, Harrisburg

Example of the life of a local hero treated in a series of decorative panels

understood any art which was content to get along without some such figures. We have no Michelangelos and Veroneses to-day, but the old masters believed in and supported a *principle* which related to every other *time* as well as to their own. They believed that lesser artists owed allegiance to the same principle and owed it in proportion to their artistic strength, and we owe it to-day in proportion to ours whether we are weak or strong.

Will not some of our critics be just enough to admit the value of significance, the value of what all the world held a matter of faith till forty years ago? We have brilliantly able critics who know their old masters, both in art and literature, by heart and love them, yet who some of them seem to have been led to a different point of view by a small modern group of contemners of significance. The latter count largely upon the example of a few men who left aside what we commonly call subject. Velasquez painted, with marvellous insight, little infantas, dwarfs and idiots, and noble, grave gentlemen. When he painted the "Madonna in glory" he failed, to be sure, in embodying any high significance. But that is not enough to condemn high significance. It does not even prove that Velasquez would have thought lightly of truly emotional feeling in an altarpiece by another painter, or would have failed to admit that certain elements of elevated inspiration were outside the field in which he was himself un-

rivalled. We are told that Tintoretto was his favorite among Italian masters, and his purchases in Italy would seem to support the story. Does one need to say more!

Frans Hals does not count pro or con, because he was all his life through given up wholly to portrait-painting—surely as noble a branch of art as exists, but which rules out what we ordinarily call subject.

With the so-called *little* Dutchmen the case is somewhat different. They are the great exponents of genre, and of genre, of course, subject is, literally considered, a characteristic constituent. But with them subject is taken and treated so differently from that of which I have been speaking, as really to count as a different artistic element. It is in some not elevated but trivial. It is incident without ideality and its motive does not rise from mere interest into real inspiration. Holland asked of its painters, as Taine observes, to paint its portrait, and the little Dutchmen painted its lesser features. Consequently the field in which they achieve distinction is not that of the subject, where they are fundamentally negligible however superficially devoted to it, but in that of technic. Yet so happy is their poise within their own limitations, often, that the slightness of their subject interest is itself a reinforcement of their technical effectiveness and not a qualification of it. So you see that even in this crucial instance of an art essentially without elevation, subject after all performs a service in-

stead of inflicting an injury. Without it the little Dutchmen would have turned even oftener than they did to the still-life in which they were at times superb but which no one but a fanatic would place on the same plane of æsthetic interest as their genre.

In a picture by Mieris, a man pulls a little dog's ear, a woman with a gentle gesture restrains him. Will the purist maintain that the picture would be better if the gestures, the episodical were eliminated? Surely it *would*, if some higher form of significance were substituted. But in any case it would be the *presence* of technic, not the absence of the so-called story-telling quality, that would save the picture or even make it better in any important degree.

Take a great man who does not belong to the past but to the present, Jean François Millet! Some of the contemners of subject would praise Millet as an example which proves their point, because he is content to paint a girl working at a churn and does not become anecdotic over her performance. But I am not excusing trivial anecdote; I am upholding significance, and Millet adored high significance in Michelangelo and extolled the story-telling power of Poussin; furthermore, his own pictures are the embodiment of it and his care about having each figure intent on its own work, "*tout à son œuvre*," and thus technically expressive rather than superficially striking, is due to this feeling of his. And still further, if you tell me that the post-impressionists are an

example of what the pursuit of significance may lead to when they make a girl's arm two yards long to show that she is reaching out after something which she yearns for, I need only say that meaning run riot is like any other good thing gone to the bad.

Finally, even giving up to those who decry significance, Velasquez, Hals, Vermeer, and the little Dutchmen on whom alone they can rely (and who, I suspect, judging from some of their own performances, would have marvelled over the imputation as a *quality* of absence of subject), is there any reason why Velasquez, Hals, and Vermeer, glorious trinity though they be, should prove all others wrong? If there are men to-day who like Vermeer can enchant us without subject—and I admit that there are some who do—let us be thankful for their good fortune and ours, but let us hope too that other modern artists struggling to express themselves may not fall from grace because they admire and believe in the significance which greater and happier artists achieved in the past.

Nor may the purist declare that he does not condemn *all* significance; that we are free to make our Washington dignified-looking, our Franklin intelligent-looking, our "widow" sad-looking, and so on. For the fact is, the enemy of significance condemns the *first* steps in its direction; if he sees a head emergent along *those* lines he hits it, and if he con-

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MAXFIELD PARRISH: Decoration for the girls' dining-room of the Curtis Publishing Company, Philadelphia

Example of decoration used as a cultivating and enlivening influence in a great commercial building

demns preparation he condemns the whole. As well say you are at liberty to leap the street but not to stride the gutter.

This idea that to have an idea, to have any subject, is to spoil the technic reminds me of the patient fishermen of Paris and of what an acquaintance of mine once said about them. To-day in Paris men stand by the side of the Seine fishing, hour after hour, day after day, week after week, in loving devotion to their sport. Nobody ever saw them catch anything. Once an American remarked this fact to my acquaintance cited above. The latter replied: "Catch anything! no, surely not—to catch anything *would interfere with the fishing.*"

High significance has been a quality inseparable in the past from any national art. In the future is its achievement to be eliminated as an *interference?*

VIII

FUNDAMENTAL EDUCATION IN ART

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The importance of foundation is the name which I should like to give to this portion of my argument. Such a name would suggest the caption to a first chapter rather than to one so far along in the series, and indeed it is a beginning over again in the sense that while the previous chapters have been addressed to those especially interested in mural painting, this one is for him who cares for every kind of art production whatever it may be.

In all of the art schools in our many cities one finds vitality, vigor, curiosity. Sometimes these are applied with more force to the work in hand, sometimes with less; but in the main it is about the same thing whether in New York, Chicago, or elsewhere. One sees promise of excellence, of success, everywhere in the work, and again one sees certain other things which give one pause.

When I entered a Paris studio more than forty years ago conditions were very different from what they are to-day; and yet as I look at their work it

appears to me that the young people now are having just about the same kind of trouble that I and my comrades had; which makes me think that people are pretty much alike up and down the world, and even at long-separated periods of time, and causes me to wonder whether noting some of my own experiences and those of others, in both the immediate and remote past, might in any way be useful.

"Ars una, species mille—art is one, its species are a thousand." So it is proclaimed by the voice of the ages. From the art student we should hear something different—that is, if I am to judge by myself and my comrades of the *atelier* in which I began to study in Paris. Could our voice as a school have become concentratedly articulate it would have said, "Species una, ars mea, ars sola—one species, my kind of art, the only art." Perhaps things are not like that now. Conditions have changed. I am speaking of forty years ago. It was certainly like that then, and in a way it was right that it should be. "My kind of art the only art," is a pretty good battle-cry for a beginner. If he have not confidence in his own legs, how is he going to stand upon them? He *must* have confidence in his own master and his own school, and that confidence, if strong enough to act as an anchor, would be more valuable to us of the last thirty years than ever be-

HOWARD PYLE: "The Genius of Art." Panel in the drawing-room of the artist's own house

Example of decoration as applied to private residences

fore. For in the past half dozen lustrums has come a crowding together of so-called movements, and such a series of analyses supposed to be searching that the very thought of them is disconcerting. Just beyond the horizon of our school life it all lies waiting to burst upon us. What wonder that when it does many of us are overwhelmed, that the faint-hearted perish, and even the courageous feel jaded at once in the presence of this prodigious *Art*, while the aggressive say to themselves: "I must scream at the top of my voice, else who will accord me any personality? What can I enunciate that is loud and clear enough to catch the ear of even ever so small a public?"

This anarchistic condition, this series of earthquakes in methods, has so shaken our artistic consciousness that the intelligent student may be forgiven for wondering which way he shall go. When I went abroad conditions were at once much easier and much harder, and you may turn the proposition inside out and repeat it to-day. They were harder for us Americans then because there was nothing to study in America. "Go straight to Paris," said William Morris Hunt to me. "You will only have to unlearn what you learn here." There were practically no art schools on this side of the water at the time. On the other hand the conditions were easier than now because once you reached Paris they were simpler—simplicity itself, indeed, in comparison with

what confronts the student who goes there to-day. To turn the proposition inside out, as I said, conditions in America to-day are much easier for the student, because his education has been prodigiously facilitated by numberless schools and much besides. On the other hand, they are harder because the anarchistic conditions have shaken the *foundations* of art education.

In Paris, in 1867, we trotted along wearing blinders, not turning our eyes from side to side, but fixing them on the master, in our first kindergarten of art training, and before our vision was strong enough to bear looking upon more than one thing at a time. Oddly enough, and utterly as the conditions varied, I believe that in our first months we suffered from exactly the same handicap that is affecting American students now. The difference, however, was and is that our master found us out and sent us to the right-about, whereas here our Pegasus seems to have taken the bit in his teeth and is likely to give his rider some bad tumbles before he can become firmly seated.

It happened in the month of May, 1867, forty-three years ago, that the ideal of a little group of art students in Paris was exactly the same as the ideal of nearly *all* the art students in America to-day—namely, *vigor* of handling. What we wanted was a vigorous-looking surface which should not appear "labored," only at that time we had not

found the word labored; we divided everything into smooth painting and strong painting. Since then we have invented fifty different surfaces and given them fifty names.

Long ago, when I went to Paris, which was still the Paris of Du Maurier's Trilby, the capital of the decadent Second Empire, and very different from the city of to-day, the exhibitions were full of rather feeble work. The glorious group of Barbizon, Millet, Rousseau, and the rest were getting ready for immortality, but had not yet come into their own, and the official painters of imperialism were not stimulating. At the Beaux Arts, Cabanel and Pils, Hébert, Gérôme, and others were teaching. There were one or two *ateliers indépendants*, as they were called. Of these the Atelier Bonnat was by far the most famous. Léon Bonnat, young, and bringing with him the traditions of Spanish vigor and the cultus of Ribera and Velasquez, had opened an *atelier d'élèves*, as they named it, a studio of pupils, to which and to whom he gave his services without payment. To it I went with many other Americans. Our master was the sensation of the moment; he had just missed the grand medal of honor with his picture of "St. Vincent de Paul," now in the church of St. Nicholas in the Fields—fields which are in the heart of Paris—and was to capture it at the following Salon with his canvas, "The Assumption of the Virgin."

The latter was a brilliant performance, and had retained its color finely when I saw it again five years or so ago in the church of St. Andrew of the charming old city of Bayonne. For Bonnat came from the Basque provinces at the foot of the Pyrenees (and he has given a noble collection of old masters to the museum of his native city, having been an enthusiastic acquirer of them for many years). Bonnat did not practise the smooth painting then in vogue; his was made up of vigorous brush strokes *dans la pâte*. Great is paint was our one thought and cry; paint, paint—lots of it. Who so contemptible as he who put it on thinly; who so safely launched as he who carried a load of it!

B., our *massier*, was a worthy leader; he was a mortar-and-trowel man, and we followed him, gaily contemptuous of any practice done outside of 31 Rue de Laval. One of the best of the many good qualities of the Paris art student in those days (I trust he has as many now) was his intense respect for his master. At that time Americans were but a tiny minority; the French students gave the tone and atmosphere of the studios. Netherlanders, Scandinavians, Russians, even Spaniards, were still in the future as influences upon art. M. Bonnat entered the *atelier* twice a week. Then the usual helpful accompaniment of our work, the imitation of cornets and organs, of lions, dogs, and pigs, died away; pipes were put out. M.'s singing—his voice

literally made the great window rattle in its setting, and though I've often heard the expression used, I have known its realization only in his case—M.'s voice, I say, ceased; you could hear a pin drop. One morning, in this almost painful first moment of quiet succeeding noise, Monsieur Bonnat said: "Gentlemen, why do you use so much paint? You are only tripping yourselves up. *I* do not use a great quantity of paint for its own sake, but because my temperament is such that I can get my effect better in that way."

The shells that dropped upon the frozen lake at the battle of Austerlitz, submerging whole regiments, were hardly more horribly quenching to enthusiasm than such a statement made to us so suddenly. For a long while afterwards the *atelier* was troubled; in time the medicine worked with some of the men and the fit survived. B. went under; he never came to anything; *not*, please understand, because forcible painting was bad, but because he had not the stuff of a forcible painter in him, put all his strength into misdirected effort, and, I verily believe, smothered his own feeble yet existent potentialities under a "gruel thick and slab" of pigment.

Bonnat followed up this sudden illumination. He insisted upon our making hard, close studies as preparatory to doing, later, things as vigorous as his if we pleased, more vigorous than his if we could. He watched our artistic inclinations, and to correct

certain of my tendencies he sent me to the Imperial Library to make pencil copies of the hard line engravings after Raphael done by Marc Antonio Raimondi in the sixteenth century. No matter how much we wanted to paint, we *must* draw for a year first, for two years if we had the time, and if the shallowness of our purses did not prevent our remaining in even inexpensive Paris. "My Americans," said M. Bonnat to me long afterwards, "are some of the very best stuff that I have, but they do not stay long enough, and that often spoils all." We obeyed our master implicitly, or at any rate tried to; although our *atelier* was one of the most unruly in Paris, as we realized when it was moved from 31 Rue de Laval to 73 Boulevard de Clichy, and we found that we had been just upon the eve of expulsion by the police of the quarter, so full was their complaint book of the remonstrances of our neighbors. The arts of peace were apparently not always our forte, but when it came to belief in the master, the patron, who could coin money in his own studio yet preferred to give two full forenoons a week to us, it was another matter. At all events, we had to draw and draw, model and model, just as carefully and closely as we might and for a very long time. And I believe that our obedience was enormously valuable to us. Imagine a pupil to-day in Paris who thought it right to study hard *cinque-cento* line engravings at the library when instead he might be

ROBERT REID: "The Speech of James Otis." Decoration in the State House, Boston, Mass.

The effect of light in the original is not rendered adequately in the photograph

freely developing in a city where all artistic chains are now broken, where knowledge must give way to feeling, where we may make a better man or woman out of a box of square blocks than by imitating their anatomy more closely.

Now I believe that the student to-day is just as willing to work hard as he was forty years ago. He has every whit as much enthusiasm, but I think that in the quality of obedience he is not quite so strong. I will not call it obedience to his master, but obedience to something which is way down at the bottom of his consciousness and which he is inclined to cover up. I fear that all this talk about freedom and feeling has bred an inevitable impatience of restraint, and that students are more inclined to do their hard work in their own way and less in that of their master. But art is a convention now as it always has been and always will be; the links of the chain hold and its evolution must accomplish itself by law; the artist of to-day cannot break it all off and make a new departure, for if it is easy to tear up a receipt it is difficult to make a new one.

Hard work and obedience to law are both virtues, but the mere exercise of a virtue is not enough; it must be virtue qualified by intelligence. There are those who have said to-day in France: "The art of all the past has existed only to show us what ought not to be done." Between these men who talk and

as yet have accomplished little, and the men who have accomplished miracles, is it so hard to choose? Let us hear the latter. It has often been told us that Michelangelo said, "Genius is eternal patience," and there is no doubt that Michelangelo was an expert in the definition of genius if ever a man was. Thomas Carlyle, too, defined genius as a "transcending capacity for taking trouble."

Students may remember then, when they wish to work vigorously and powerfully, and when they disdain what they call labored painting—may remember, I say, that two of the most rugged and original personalities that ever existed, the one in literature, the other in art, have averred that patience—careful, painstaking patience—is the crowning virtue which shall furnish the basis to the brilliant and captivating vigor which is so desirable an achievement. And do not mistake my intention. I am *with* the student. I sympathize in his wish. The skilful manipulation of pigment is a capacity to be struggled for and to be proud of when obtained; it makes the surface of the canvas attract at once. But if the canvas is to be made vital-looking and lastingly solid as well as attractive, behind and under the lively manipulation of pigment there must be construction and knowledge, the fruit of hard work.

Idolatry of mere dexterity is peculiarly dangerous in America because it assails us along the lines of the least resistance. Dexterousness comes naturally

to the American, and in its favor he is sometimes only too ready to suppress hard thinking, which is the one invaluable kind of hard work and discipline in any profession. Technical excellence is at its very best only a means to an end, and art stands for something much finer, greater, and deeper than even the very skilfullest and most brilliant handling of one's tools.

And it is easy to be specious in advocating strength. "I flog the canvas with swift brush strokes," is quoted as a saying of Van Gogh, but in saying it he merely coined a phrase which catches the ear. "I base my swift strokes upon a swift apprehension of the true sizes, shapes, and colors of things in nature," would be much more illuminating and convincing, if not so picturesque as to wording. It would also be much more difficult of accomplishment.

Dashing handling is so good to look at, and conveys such a sense of pleasure in the work of the executant, that I do not expect easily to convert students to the renunciation of vigorous brushing for a period long enough to suffice for even a few close studies. Nevertheless, let me assure them that the greatest artists, and among them those who have attained phenomenal facility, have almost invariably commenced by close, patient, and even hard studies of nature. Velasquez is a notable example of this. He began with the closest surface handling, then progressed to his final marvellous

maestria. Some great artists like Hals have gone straight on from the beginning, always loosening their manner; others have had occasional returns upon themselves. As for Rembrandt, he commenced with a smooth and exquisite finish; then later, when he could toss about his pigment as he willed, and juggle his surface into a jewelled glitter or pass through it into broad, air-filled depths, he would suddenly turn back to his first close manner. Look at his Syndics in the museum of Amsterdam—then at some little picture by him—an interior of Solomon's Temple, for instance, with its crowded figures—and see how well an artist who never had a superior realized that broad painting would not suit all moods or all needs. Note, too, how Rubens, from whose brush flowed rivers of oiliest pigment, learned to make studies exquisite in finish and closeness of modelling.

If you are tired of my wise saws about the past, if you want a modern instance? here it is.

For reliance upon handling, pure and simple, I know of no more remarkable example than that of M. Henri Martin. When you first see his immense mural paintings for Toulouse, you cannot think of anything *but* the handling; these tens of thousands of little spots of every kind of yellow, pink, green, and blue seem like sunlight resolved into its different chemical properties, and fill the eye and mind. His mowers and maidens are just congeries of these

same little spots. The gowns have no folds, the faces no eyes, noses, mouths, nothing but spots, spots, spots.

By and by, after you have fallen back to the proper distance and recovered from the first pleasant shock of this charming surface, you realize that it is not only infused with a rare sense of color, but that these silhouettes are of just the right shape, the lights and shadows of the right value, and that behind it all is knowledge—knowledge earned slowly, by earnest, thoughtful work. Best of all, you may have the *proof* of this by merely going a few yards further and passing through a door; and it is for this reason that a visit to the Capitole, as it is called, of the old city of Toulouse in southern France, is of quite peculiar value to any painter, and especially to any mural worker. Here upon the gallery walls you have the gamut of Henri Martin, and behold you find him beginning with close drawing, in which all the details, although kept relatively flat, are made out and modelled, and we note with natural surprise that this painter of intensely rich and vibrant harmonies has begun in a cold, even a chalky key. Next, in his large canvas, "*A chacun son chimère*," a vibrant warmth is beginning to make itself gently felt like the sun through mist; we recall his decorations in the Hôtel de Ville of Paris, as a link between the *chimère* and his final manner, and we come upon the latter in the sonorous color of the canvas in

which the Toulousans walk beside their river against an after-sunset sky. Or take one of our own comrades, Gari Melchers. In his exhibition of a few years ago in New York there was a large canvas representing Dutch girls in church, hard and close in every detail; but if it had not been for what he learned in such earnest, early study as that picture shows he could never have painted the rich, vigorously brushed solid canvas which has so much vitality as it hangs upon the walls of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

As I have said before in writing of Frans Hals, Hals's brush strokes are not wonderful because they are broad, but because while broad they are of exactly the right size, shape, and tone, and are laid on in exactly the right place. No matter how handsomely you stir up your surface, if you do not know your subsurface well somebody will see through the upper layer and find you out. If underneath you have a closely modelled study, you may strike out details, broaden planes, and your resultant breadth will look felt and finished. It will have nothing flimsy about it, but will have quality instead, and seem what it *is*—a solid piece of work. All this because you have built it on a foundation. It is an honest piece of work, and you have achieved your desired vigor too, for in loving the latter you are not worshipping a false god. He is a beneficent and salutary god, but in sacrificing to him you will be

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JOHN S. SARGENT: "The Dogma of the Trinity." Decoration in the Public Library, Boston, Mass.
Example of the use of gold and high and low relief

twice blest if you burn incense also to his twin deity, the Goddess of Patience.

If one studies the history of painting—I do not mean only by reading about it in books, but by looking at it upon the walls of palaces and churches, over the altars of the Gothic period, in the pilastered corniced frames of the fifteenth century, or in the heavily sculptured coffers to ceilings of the late Renaissance—one finds that the school's evolution has been like the evolution of the individual.

First the gown was buttoned tight for strenuous endeavor, then gradually loosened, and under the loosened, vigorously brushed surface of the canvas there has been at first a close preparation; for one *cannot* begin with Rembrandt in his last stage, or Hals in his, or Velasquez in his—one must begin as they did, with care and patience.

As I walk through the art schools of America I am astonished at the vigor of the work, and I become filled with enthusiasm at the contact with so much young enthusiasm in others. I say to myself, "What vigor everywhere, what liveliness, what good fresh color, how the understanding of color and tonality, especially of distinction of tone, are growing in the American school, and how much feeling for light there is," then I add, after the apprehension has come gradually, "and what similarity in all the classwork of pupils!" And I ask myself, "Is it entirely right that the work of so many young people who

presumably possess such different temperaments, should be so much alike, even admitting that this is but an early step in their development?" Why should it be so similar? It is not because they have the same master, for they have not. It is not because they lack willingness to look hard, according to their own lights, at models who differ very much yet seem so much alike in the painted studies. Finally, I have thought I recognized what caused the similarity, and realized that all over America the pupils, while trying for light and color, were caring supremely about one thing above every other—namely, that their work should look vigorous and not labored, and believed that this vigor could be indicated only by a very loose handling of the paint. "Not labored"—fatal expression, grievously hurtful in its implication. What can be done in art or anywhere else without study—without studious thought? And studious thought is labor. With this idea, that a surface which looks labored *must* be avoided, the students throughout America are nearly all treating it in nearly the same way. But it is in his treatment of this surface that the painter expresses his own temperament; and it is not probable that the temperaments of all students are as much alike as the surface uniformity that I speak of would imply. It is quite sure that later in life able students will find that they differ importantly, and that they will succeed along the lines not of their similarity but of their

differentiation. I do not mean that they should throw the reins on to the neck of their inclination and let it run away with them. They should look hard at nature; but the harder and more honestly they look the more impossible they will find it to see nature just as their fellow student does, for the very simple reason that they are they and he is he.

It is easy to understand how it all happens, and it has happened to us all in our time. In art, as in so many things, there is always a momentary popular tendency among practitioners, which sometimes is hardly more than an exaggerated fad, but oftener, as in the present case, is based on a very real desideratum—that of vigor. The students, A, B, C, D, are working hard at their studies from the same model. A becomes much interested in the painting of certain muscles in the back; delicate forms they are, and before he knows it he is smoothing them and pushing them to a relative finish. Suddenly he looks up and says to himself: "How much more *vigorous* B's muscles look in the back which he is painting! It will never do to leave mine so smooth. They are feeble beside his"; and at once a bigger brush and some loaded strokes make his study look like B's. C and D are also thinking first of all about strength, therefore the four studies look alike.

Mr. Kenyon Cox said, in his admirable lectures, that the desire for vigorous strokes has so increased the size of brushes that with many of those cur-

rently used it is no longer possible to execute any form in nature which is less than one inch wide. Now nature is full of forms, some of them as beautiful as any in the world, which are a good deal less than an inch wide, and you *must* learn to execute them. You do not go to school for the achievement of vigor alone in painting, but for the attainment of all-round knowledge which you will translate into vigor *or* delicacy, accordingly as one or the other best serves your purpose.

Varying treatments will be useful at different times, for not only do artists' temperaments differ, but moods as well; one thing will be done better to-day, another to-morrow. Later in life the artist will deliberately throw away for the moment some acquired knowledge, set it aside for the time and work along the best lines; that is to say, the most sympathetic. But all-round knowledge, ballast-knowledge, *must* be at hand to start with. Afterward some of it may be thrown overboard to lighten ship or balloon, to reach a higher wave crest, or mount into a rarer ether.

The more you know processes, and the better you understand them, the more you will profit; but your highest profit will come from the clear apprehension that they are one and all means, not ends. For a process may become too costly for what it accomplishes. You remember the prince in the fairy story. He had learned to use his sword so adroitly

and swiftly, that when a shower came he could flourish his blade so rapidly about his head as to parry every drop and remain quite dry. It was certainly wonderful enough for fairy tale, but an umbrella would have entailed less labor, and such dexterity of fence should have served a greater purpose.

A famous artist in speaking of the changes that come with the sequence of years, used to say: "In eighteen hundred and so and so, all the pictures in the Paris Salon looked as if they were painted with ink; in eighteen hundred and something else, all the pictures in the Salon looked as if they were painted in chalk, but they were just the same pictures."

He meant that those who are so impressible as to follow each fashion of the moment, be it for tonality or vigor or feeling, merely swell that regular and unending processional which keeps alive the commonplace for its little day, then melts into oblivion, leaving no mark.

In all that I have to say to students there is nothing half so close to my heart as the desire to impress the absolute necessity for hard, careful, close drawing and modelling from nature, before they permit themselves to loosen their surface and handle vigorously. What shall I say to impress the student with what I am *sure* are facts, and will have to be met later if he tries to avoid them at first? The later he meets them the worse they will be; they are like mumps and measles—the young go through them easily,

but those who are grown older and more inelastic are roughly treated by them.

When an invading army enters an enemy's country it takes good care not to leave behind it, between itself and its own frontier, any fortified cities held by the enemy, because such fortresses would become sources of danger in case of doubt or defeat. Therefore the invading army makes itself master of such places before proceeding farther. Now if you produce brilliantly handled and broadly constructed work, without having first learned to construct very closely and correctly, you will be in precisely the condition of a careless invading force with dangerous enemies behind it.

Or let us take another and more artistic simile. Venice, one of the greatest art centres of the past, is, as you know, built upon wooden piles driven into the mud of the lagoons at the head of the Adriatic. A thousand years ago its houses were rough and rude; gradually they grew into beauty, and as time went on, palaces took their place, and always newer and lovelier palaces, till the very flower of Gothic and Renaissance art bloomed above the mud of the morass. It was all supported upon piles driven with a cunning and skill which are interesting when one reads of them. It wasn't pleasant down there in the black mud; it was even less pleasant than it is in the schoolroom where the student groans over the difficulties of close drawing and modelling, but

HERMAN T. SCHLADERMUNDT: Decoration in the art museum in the residence of Mr. Thomas F. Ryan

the pile-driving had to be done, and done right, in order that the superstructure should be substantial and lasting. *Festina lente* (Make haste slowly), said the old Romans; they did make haste slowly, and established so firm a polity that they enlightened the world for two thousand years.

Perhaps some students will say to me: "Why this reiterated sententiousness? Why do you persist in telling us that water is wet and fire will burn? We know all about spiders and patience, and squirrels and nuts and industry. Tell us something newer and more exciting." Let me say that in a time of almost universal sensationalism a little sententiousness has a positive value. A phenomenal condition has obtained in Paris, where absolute freedom in the arts is preached, and feeling is extolled, not only as the highest, but as the only desideratum. This new movement will die out in time, from inanition, emptiness, lack of nourishment from within or without. But meantime this preachment of license is doing harm. Young people think: "Why wear chains of endeavor if one may do better without them?" Let me quote to you two statements, which I have heard made with most evident sincerity.

First this one—some people who are interested in establishing a great art school, who have given their fortunes to it, and who have had experience of many years, said the other day: "The result of what we have learned by our experience is this: 'We must

not have anything to do with *paying* pupils. Any young people who *pay* for their education will *not* do hard, close drawing. They insist that as a return for what they pay they *must* be allowed to divert themselves with pigment, and make at once dashing-looking studies in color. Therefore, if we are to make artists we want only non-paying pupils of a free school, then we can insist upon their studying seriously.'"

Now let us listen to the other statement. It was made by the teachers and governing body of a great free art school. They said: "It is a pity that in order to be exempt from taxation we have to maintain a *free* school; perhaps if our young people had to *pay* something they might realize the value of education and be willing to do some hard drawing and studying. As it is, they say to themselves: 'We pay nothing. This is a free school. We wish to be free to study in our way, to be broad and easy, and up-to-date in our methods.'"

Now I have simply quoted to you what I have heard said recently. What do you think of these opinions, of the temper of pupils? If they are correct, why then we are between the devil and the deep sea!

I know that the young art students of America declare with a good conscience, and quite truly, that they are enthusiastically willing to work hard; but I say that they must be willing not only to labor

over what they like to study, but also over what they do *not* like to study, else they'll never attain to anything but a one-sided development. And mind, that in saying all this I personally sympathize heartily with the desire for vigorous brushing in a picture. I believe in it. But vigorous brushing must be backed up by other and preparatory qualities.

Though the student may succeed in getting brilliant surfaces without a substructure of knowledge, he will find the earth shaking under his feet, weak spots will begin to show through, and he will lose his time in trying to repair what ought to have been right in the beginning. If, however, he begins with close work based on knowledge, he may make all sorts of mistakes as he goes on, may flounder about, yet in time he will get the effect he wants, because the work was built right in the beginning, and he has under foot a solid field for experimenting until he attains the right solution of his problem. I, at least, have verified all this by bitter experience, by my blunders, by light-heartedly jumping over something and leaving it behind instead of filling it up, leaving it because I was in a hurry to reach my goal and get my effect.

Broad painting, to be sure, *as* painting impresses more forcibly and immediately than close painting ever can. As a man learns more and more, he may, with great advantage to his canvases, suppress de-

tail in favor of breadth. But close study he must have at first as the basis for knowledge, because—and now listen to this, and remember it always—in his rendering of nature *no one* can intelligently leave out of an art work what he has not already *learned to intelligently put into it.* This statement is so sound that it cannot be controverted, and with it this chapter may close.

IX

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE

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I

In the foregoing chapters pleas have been made for recognition of the importance of decoration, of the necessity for harmony among those who create that decoration, and of the value of experience. From such experience and collaboration will inevitably result good art, but it will not all be art of one kind, for there are many paths up Parnassus, and they all lead to the top. These last chapters will be given to a plea for toleration and culture, that is to say for a withholding of censure in favor of examination.

The latter will widen into culture which will ensure catholicity as to methods, and will help us to develop, each in our own way, while it will diminish the likelihood of his being at the mercy of almost purely destructive criticism from those who should be sympathetic because they, too, are painters, but who are contemptuous because fundamentally ignorant of any method save their own.

It is true that the actively contemptuous make up a relatively small body, but they are surrounded by a much larger body of those who are indifferent

to anything save their own way of looking at art; from them the actively contemptuous make converts, while upon the public they exercise an influence invariably unfortunate. The men of group A say of groups B and C, "*Their* work is not worth considering"; groups B and C each repeat the same regarding the other two groups. The public listens, then argues: "If either one of these groups is right the two others are not worth considering. Now as we cannot know *which* of the three is right, our policy is clear; it is to not consider *any* of them, but to collect the works of the past instead of theirs."

Here is what happened in the late seventies. The Paris-Munich men came home and said: "The Hudson River School is weak, negligible." The Hudson River School said: "These parvenus are un-American; they are imperfect imitators of Parisians; they are negligible." The public said: "It appears, according to their own testimony, that they are *all* negligible"—and American artists were neglected for twenty years after! During the last decade a robust sentiment has been growing up in favor of American art. How shall it be strengthened? What is the remedy for that which occurred in 1880? Is it enthusiastic and indiscriminate laudation of each other's work within the fraternity? Assuredly not; the remedy is culture, *study* of each other's work and intelligent comprehension of each other's aims and methods. From comprehension

Andrew T. Schwartz: "Justice"

will come first toleration, then intelligent admiration; and this admiration, wisely expressed, will help to establish what is worthy, since it is not sporadic notice of each other that really counts, but gradual infiltration of ideas.

May I, in my talk about culture, go back for a moment to my first experience of evolution of the art idea in my early training, and return to No. 31 Rue de Laval, the Atelier Bonnat? In those days I began just as a normal and reasonable art student should. I worried myself sick over what the master said or didn't say, about my work; because I couldn't get my figure plumb or my proportions right, because my color dried in, or because it would not dry fast enough. My little two-foot study was the most important thing in the world. I know from my own experience exactly how all that is—how natural, and in a way how right.

Blessed be concentration! Without it the beginner cannot get along at all; and for a while at least the more he thinks about his own efforts and the less about other people's the better. But when he does begin to think about other people's work his mind will grow faster, his horizon widen more rapidly, if he will try not to condemn any methods merely because they are not his.

If he does not sometimes look about him and realize that other aspirations than his exist, he is in danger—from too long and close concentration—of

contracting a mental squint. In the very beginning he is too busy to be uncharitable; too close to his own sheet of drawing-paper to see beyond it; his world is bounded by the school. But just a little later he is emancipated; and it was in the atelier, and from the more advanced men, who already had little studios of their own where they worked for one-half of the day, that I first learned what a paltry affair was anybody else's art than ours as exemplified by that of our master. However, when I heard the master himself talk, a new point of view was afforded, and a new vista opened. If A and B and C, the *camarades*, exalted our patron Bonnat and scoffed at D, E, and F, Bonnat himself admired and studied the latter trio.

This fact reached me only gradually, but at last I commenced to recognize it as phenomenal. In the intervals of work my French fellow students became *mitrailleuses* of criticism. I gathered from them that so and so, famous men, were artists of the *neuvième catégorie*, the ninth class, not second or third, mind you. When I first arrived in Paris I had letters to Gérôme and ambitions toward becoming his pupil at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. He accepted me as candidate, but said: "It will be three months before you can enter, you must not lose time —go to Bonnat, there is no better man in France." Now, if there were in the land two artists who differed utterly in methods they were Gérôme and

Bonnat. It was astonishing to me that the former should recommend the latter. But I went to him, and at the end of the three months did not wish to leave him. Indeed, when I looked at his powerful canvases and listened to the enthusiasm of his pupils I could even understand that Gérôme realized his own feebleness as painter and Bonnat's superiority sufficiently to send the pupil to him; it seemed generous but natural. A year or so later I went to M. Bonnat's studio for special advice of some kind. High on a ladder he was painting the sky in his "Assumption of the Virgin." With a big brush loaded with orange-pink color he was beating the bright, strong blue of the sky with regular drum-like strokes, "tacking," but it seemed almost like hammering, and compelled my admiration by its vigor. I asked my questions, and in relation to one of them he said: "Better go to Gérôme with that, *il est bien bon garçon*, and there is no better man in France to tell you."

Here was a surprise; these were the selfsame words that Gérôme had used in relation to Bonnat. To be sure, they referred to a different quality, but this vigorous handler of pigment was sending me to the smooth painter Gérôme! It was the apparent inconsistency that astonished me. I began to realize that here at least was affirmation that artists could in wholly differing ways be peers; it was a new impression and an illuminating one. Later I

found Puvis de Chavannes painting a decoration inscribed "To my friend Bonnat" upon the walls of the patron's private hotel; Bonnat, in turn, doing Puvis's portrait, and either artist praising the other to the skies. Young as I was, my experience had already bred questioning in me as to how far their respective pupils would follow this mutual admiration of two painters who differed radically in nearly all their processes.

I began to see in the example of these men, Gérôme, Bonnat, Puvis, far older than I, far wiser and each of them archfamous, that an artist might unswervingly follow one road and yet not doubt that his friend upon another was just as earnest a pilgrim and just as directly headed for the goal. I commenced to realize that these roads would meet somewhere and began to conceive dimly of an attainable *Ars Una.* To have a *solid* perception of the unity of art is to own an invaluable property, and its possessor is in a sense grown up at once, an adult even though he still be struggling with the problems of school-life. But in its highest form this perception is the rarest of possessions; it belongs in its utmost development only to the Titians and Velasquezes, the Rembrandts and Millets of this world, and is given to other men but in the descending scale of the proportion of their greatness. To be sure, almost any artist who has reached his third decade will admit that methods differing from

his own may be good, but many of them admit it only perfunctorily, and do not act as if they believed it.

Even perfunctory admission is something, much indeed, for it is contempt of others that is dangerous. Contempt is a weed that grows fast and rank and high, and soon chokes everything else in the garden. I have said that with the beginner scepticism regarding any other art-practice than his own is in some degree natural and not unhealthy; the child must have confidence in his own feet before he can walk freely, but there soon comes a time when it is seasonable to weed one's garden, and to admit that the feet of others may tread paths divergent from ours, yet leading all the same to artistic salvation. The danger is that later, if the young man has not begun early to cast intelligent eyes upon other methods than his own, he will commence to harden and will narrow until, in middle age, it will be impossible for him to turn outward those many appreciative facets for that reflection of nature as seen through the eyes of others, which has been essential to the very greatest artists. For the very greatest artists have been the most generously and widely cultured. I do not mean the men who have won the most degrees or medals, but who have recognized what is largest and most general in life and art and nature, the Dantes, the Michelangelos, the Miltons, the Leonardos, and the Millets. The artist of the Renaissance stood the centre of an unassailable trio,

his arms linked fast in those of science and literature on either side. Raphael, at the time of his death, was not only a mural painter—and the mural painter must have one foot at least planted solidly upon science—he was also planning nothing less than a huge restoration of the city of ancient Rome. Architecture then as now was as much a science as an art, and the Renaissance architects thoroughly understood painting and sculpture in relation to their own work. Michelangelo, as we know, was "the man with four souls," Leonardo was so all-embracing that we might account him a kind of spoiled child of Athene. Rembrandt, a bad business man, ruined himself as a collector. Rubens, more balanced, absolutely balanced indeed, profited by his own collections; was close to the learned, and distinguished himself as ambassador. Velasquez was majordomo of Philip IV., and master of such necessary pageants as royal marriages. And not only these giants but hundreds of other artists were prodigiously cultured. As you come down the centuries you still find that knowledge of, and respect for, the methods of others mark the most famous painters—Reynolds with his cultus of the Italians, Lawrence with his collection of drawings, Millet with his understanding of Michelangelo and Poussin.

It is true that the artists of the Renaissance based all culture upon either the study of the ancients or

TABER SEARS: Frieze of the Apostles, Church of the Epiphany, Pittsburg, Pa.

else of a few immediate forerunners, who had founded their own practice, in turn, on what they believed to have been that of the Romans. With Vasari, the Renaissance public called the gothic masters of the North barbarous, and their prejudice against the latter lasted for three centuries and blinded people down past the days of Goethe, who shut his eyes tight (though they were beauty-loving eyes if ever such existed) to the frescoes of Assisi because Minerva beckoned to him more compellingly from further up the hill. But both Vasari and Goethe believed in culture passionately, and their neglect of the Gothic was caused, at least on Vasari's part, far more by ignorance than by contempt. For that matter, it was the contempt of indifference rather than of active dislike, which in past ages fell upon superseded art. Lethe arose and covered with its waves the Italian primitives, the Giottos and Botticellis and all the other early artists; and to our great advantage, since those waters of oblivion preserved the *tondi* and panels and *cassone* fronts from restoration, and only a few masters, Titian, Correggio, Raphael, and one or two more, were tall enough in reputation to remain emergent, and hence often to fare hardly at the hands of the over-painters. As for the gothic masters of mediæval centuries, they almost lost track of their parentage in the turmoil of barbarian invasion. A little light flickered in the monasteries, and even in the darkest years there

never was a time when Aristotle was not a name to conjure with, or when there were not some men, tonsured or untonsured, who had heard of Horace and Cicero. But such names were only a faint echo from an otherwise forgotten past to nearly all who practised the graphic arts.

The influence of Roman work passed onward to the Como masons, to Burgundian and Provençal monks; now and then a beam of light from Byzantium or Syria glanced down the steel line of the Crusaders as far as some church of Venice or Périgueux, but by the time of the cathedral-builders of the Ile-de-France, men worked in a changed world; they thought of the Romanesque only as a starting-point, of the Roman not at all; while five hundred years later the men of the bag-wig period, indifferent even to the early Renaissance, turned their backs squarely on the Middle Ages and their eyes once more toward the orders of Vitruvius.

II

We see, then, that the artists of the past were often innocently ignorant of their own parentage, and did not know whence they derived, even while trading successfully upon some paternal trait. But our age is eclectic beyond any other, and when we are ignorant we are so by deliberate neglect. With us, photography and facilitated transportation have brought

our far-away artist-cousins into our family of to-day. Any one of us may for a dime buy a reproduction of a work of art better and more correct in its way than could be obtained for all his money by the richest art-loving nobleman in Europe travelling through Italy in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, with a whole retinue of servants, and in coaches that had been floated down rivers of France or Germany and carried piecemeal over the Alps on mule-back, to go home again filled with copper-plate engravings and hard-outline reproductions of statuary which seem preposterous to our modern eyes. To-day an intelligent schoolboy can, in a way, know more of Phidias or Praxiteles than could Michelangelo or Benvenuto Cellini.

Understand me clearly. I have repeated the words "in a way," for in *another* way a Michelangelo or a Donatello was a seer and a prophet who could look, we may not doubt it, backward up the ages, and vaticinate over a poor Roman copy, finding mighty stimulus in what had been but a borrowed thought, a reflection of a light, which, hidden from Michelangelo behind horizons or under earth, shines for us to-day, dimmed perhaps by stains and breakage, yet in the original handiwork of a great Hellene. Therefore, there is no excuse for us if we feel contempt for other ways than ours; history, archæology, photography, travel teach us that many methods are peers and invaluable. If we even shrug our shoulders

gently over anything artistic that has completely developed, it is not quite well with us; then what shall we say of those post-impressionists who spit upon the past, declaring that the ancient masters existed only to show us what to avoid?

To-day learned men explain to us both the Greek and the Gothic; if we see the glory of Titian's color, we know, too, the still greater glory of the glass of Chartres and Bourges. In looking on the sparkling splendor of Veronese's and Tiepolo's canvases, we can remember the solemn splendor of the mosaics of Ravenna and the Palatine Chapel. We may be personally all devotion to one school; we cannot forget that another beside it has flourished in the sunshine of sincere popular favor—popular, that is, in the largest and best sense. Do we bow to a cultus of the ugly which we call the strong and the true? Truly Goya is magnificent, but how about the "Venus of Milo"? Is she feeble, is she artificial? Or if we cry out with Winckelmann for Greek deities, how about Rembrandt? Is he not also divine? We must not abuse Correggio for loving great starry eyes and filling cupolas with elfin or godlike presences, simply because we see in the distance Chardin coming along with his loaf of bread and his slice of cheese, and love him, too. Yes, it is quite true, as Ruskin says, that a German may be as solemnly and devoutly contemplative of a lemon-pip and a cheese-paring as an Italian is of a Madonna in glory; but it is the

contemplativeness of either which is his invaluable possession, and, as to varying mental attitudes, the more our light is broad-flung over great surfaces the more crannies, too, it will illuminate, and the better it will be for us, the more the illumination will beat back into our hearts and minds. While the gods and giants file along the frieze of the great altar of Pergamus, men and maidens, pages and cooks and scullions, too, pass us panelled upon wood or copper by the hands of the "little Dutchmen," and before these giants and pygmies alike we may say: "Stand, ye are perfect." Our ignorance of a certain phase of art does not cancel it; Madonna is as beautiful potentially in the darkness at night in the museum-gallery as by day; on the morrow morning we may admire her again, if we will. Think for a moment how the general enthusiasm has always come in waves, waxing and subsiding. Forty years ago Rubens was a giant in name, as he is now and always shall be; but people thought comparatively little about a certain contemporary and friend of Rubens, who had been Philip IV.'s majordomo, painted royal portraits, and was named Velasquez. By and by the French masters praised him to their pupils, and Mr. Stevenson began to write of him, and Sir Walter Armstrong and Mr. Claude Phillips and Mr. Ricketts followed suit; until, just as in the sixteenth century the Spanish court brought black into fashion of dress all over Europe,

so in Munich and Paris the black and white pictures came to the fore, and upon the occasion of any argument, despite Whistler's query, *every one* dragged in Velasquez. Rubens was in the shade for the moment and the hispaniolated art-lover maintained that Velasquez was far greater than Titian; surely in unprofitable discussion, for who cares whether Mount Dhawalaghiri or Mount Kinchinjunga is a few score of feet the higher? If you step backward and view the Himalayas in their chain, or art in its succession, you cannot tell among the tallest which is overtopping.

X

HAVE WE AS YET A STYLE?

X

HAVE WE AS YET A STYLE?

If travel and the improved reproduction of pictures have made us familiar with the famous examples of the latter, have we, after so much admiration, observation, and sometimes imitation of the art of the past, anything to-day at all approaching a style? We can at least affirm that we have some strongly marked tendencies. Much writing has been devoted to the discussion of the question of an epochal style in art; that is to say, a dominating style of a period growing gradually out of a preceding style, lapsing gradually into a succeeding one, and so imposing itself that every artist worked along its lines as naturally as a man walking through an open country would keep to the hard, beaten, easy road. Excursions afield he might make, and the greater the artist the more likely he would be to overstep the common path, but he could never wholly get away from it. Boucher might be frivolous, Fragonard joyously indecorous, Chardin grave, homely, and *recueilli*, Cochin intensely serious with his little engraved profiles, Moreau almost classic in the beauty of compositions

which yet are heaped up with *falbalas* and coquettish accessories with nonsensical appellations, but with one and all of these men you feel the century, eighteenth in name, the epoch of starch and powder, of wig and patch and hoop and high heels. And it is so with earlier centuries; we see the dryness (delightful to live with, for all that it is dry and hard) of the fifteenth-century Primitives, loosening and expanding in the work of the Roman school, gorgeously full-blown in that of the Venetians, as the sap of antiquity at the roots of art begins to run again. Then we note returning hardness, stiffer, darker costumes, black armors even, as the hand of Spain closes upon Italy, a hardness which, unluckily, does not bring back with it the precision of fifteenth-century dryness, until a little later we see *seicento* writ large in the very faces of saints and nymphs alike. We may well call such gradually changing interpretations of nature "styles," but when we come to our own time we should be hard put to attempt such denomination. Probably our successors, when far enough removed, will recognize our characteristics, but they will not be so marked and persistent as those of the past.

Nor is this because we have sharpness of sudden contrast. Our ladies, who abruptly drop voluminous drapery and appear to be clothed in an enlarged lamp-wick, tight, cylindrical, even-sided, are, after all, not much more suddenly transformed than was

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Edward Simmons: "The Civilization of the Northwest." Panel in the Minnesota Capitol, St. Paul, Minn. (Pendentive to one of the piers of rotunda)

a Récamier or a Beauharnais, svelte and low-crowned, just emergent from the enormous hoop of a Marie Antoinette, and from under the huge tower of hair and ribands and feathers which (we may quote an author of the time) made a woman's face appear to be just midway between her heels and the top of her coiffure. Even as early as the fourteenth century had come an equally sudden and prodigious change, when men—for this time it was with warriors, not women, that the fashion altered most—came down from their saddles to fight on foot, threw off the gown that reached the heels, put on the short, padded doublet, the juste-au-corps, the tight-to-the-body, the ancestor of the jersey, and when the knights at Nicopolis hacked off their long-toed shoes with their own swords in order to stand firmly on their feet. No, we are not the only people who have made sudden changes, but the sudden changes of the past were not directly imitated as ours are. We run a gamut of costume skilfully varied by dressmakers fortified with study of antique examples, and I cannot believe that, with our enormous opportunity for eclecticism, we shall ever have such gradually evolved and distinctly characterized styles as the earlier centuries have known. As it is with dress so it is, to a certain extent at least, with the graphic arts. We have been shown so much that we inevitably recognize and remember many kinds of excellence and admit them as

such. Partisans some of us will be, but in the main a good deal of catholicity is sure to be bred.

You may say, people have never agreed much. I reply, people have never had such a chance to agree before, and to accept so many kinds of things, for they have never before been so juxtaposed with the concrete message, not only with infinitely reduplicated and admirable reproductions of art works, but with the originals. Facility and cheapness of transportation have brought the latter near; for in spite of reproductions, Mohammed must still go to the mountain, the great original. But, with five-day steamers and aeroplanes, perhaps, in the future, Mohammed may visit so many mountains in a short time that admiration and understanding of varied kinds of good things will become possible. Some one has said that, whether we agree or disagree with Darwin, we can no longer reflect upon certain subjects without doing so at least in terms of Darwinism. This application has been passed onward felicitously to the system of Morelli in art expertism. Whether Morelli was right or wrong in specific instances, we cannot to-day conceive of a situation in expertism which should wholly ignore him. When we are studying the authorship of old pictures, we are bound to think of certain things in terms of Morellianism; his theories have opened so many ordered vistas that our eyes are bound to follow them instead of straying.

And to-day we could not fix our mental eyes upon any focal point which should become pivotal to the evolution of a style. We could not forget what has been shown us in delightful but confusing quantity. In the past, single-mindedness sometimes came from dearth of knowledge. For instance, toward the end of the twelfth century, when the aspiration of the whole city flamed up into the desire and the will to build a minster, the knight or merchant or beggar, who pushed a barrow, the noble lady who tied her long swinging sleeves into bags for carrying heavy stones, the child who brought water to slake the lime for the workers, never thought for one moment about Greek temple or Roman basilica, or Egyptian or Assyrian sculpture. They did not know anything whatever about them; they only knew that there in Chartres or Paris or Rheims they were all very busy rebuilding a low-browed heavy church, which we, not they, would call Romanesque, into a lofty cage of masonry full of huge windows and running as far up into the air as stone construction would permit.

To-day when we build a cathedral we are plagued by our souvenirs and wonder whether we shall make it "Romanesque" or "Gothic" or "Renaissance." Whatever we do make and whatever we call it, we may be sure that it will in a way resemble some famous building of the past—and why should it not? In the arts one thing is born of another as surely as

man is born of woman. Said John La Farge to me several years ago: "If a pupil tells me that he has done something wholly original, I do not want to see it."

To-day when we decorate a building with mural painting we *must* follow in somebody else's footsteps. They may have trodden the rock of the Acropolis or the sands of Asia Minor to enter the cella of a Greek temple, or they may have trudged the polygonal pavement of a fifteenth-century Florentine street, but wherever we go somebody's footprints will underlie ours. We may climb upon the scaffold after Giotto in Padua to study simplicity in decoration; or we may go a few hundred feet further down the streets of the same little city and clamber after Mantegna up his ladders to admire the dry, nervous draughtsmanship of one of the noblest of stylists; or in some convent's refectory, we may humbly try to gather up a few crumbs that fell from the abundance of Veronese's banquet; but wherever we pass we shall find that some one else's paint-box has been there before ours.

And there is nothing in all this to discourage one; nothing to avoid. It is natural, evolutionary, and fecundating. The artist who worries most about being individualistic is least likely to become so. A fellow-worker once said to me: "We should try to be spontaneous." Now, he who tries to be spontaneous and to lift himself by the straps of his boots

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W. T. Smedley: "The Awakening of a Commonwealth." Panel in the Luzerne County Court-House, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Example of the portrait used in large groups of figures

is certain of only one thing—exhaustion. On the contrary, he who looks and learns and lingers need not fear, if he really be an artist (if he be not, why! of that kind, "*non ragioniam di lor*"), that his following footsteps will lead him away from himself. On the contrary, he will find himself; a self strengthened by his contact with the healthy art of others; he need not fear, because if he have a real personality, no matter how much he looks at the work of the old Italian, he cannot possibly be anything but an American, since his temperament, if he have one, is part of himself, and therefore of his race.

XI

EVOLUTION OF PRESENT PRACTICE

XI

EVOLUTION OF PRESENT PRACTICE

I

By the time that the World's Fair of Chicago closed its gates, it was evident that America would attempt to take up the succession of the older nations in mural painting. We have in earlier chapters considered decoration as a form of artistic endeavor, described some of its processes, and enumerated some of the difficulties which confront both architect and mural painter. We shall now rather discuss decoration as applicable to American needs and shall try to consider some of the direct or indirect derivatives of our contemporaneous decorative practice. Our present practice in mural painting in America is composite in its origin. Our technic was acquired in the main in Paris ateliers, and it is applied to the creation of wall paintings which derive largely from study of the Italian work of the Renaissance, and which in turn is in some cases modified by admiration for the art of Puvis de Chavannes.

Our wall paintings are almost invariably done in oil upon canvas, since true fresco has hardly been

attempted in America; nevertheless fresco with its clear light character of effect has influenced us not a little, particularly through the practice of Puvis, who felt its charm profoundly, though he himself worked in oils. The beginning of our opportunity was coincidental with the greatest celebrity of that artist, who, after years of indifference on the part of the public, suddenly came into his own with his decorations in the Panthéon relating to the life of St. Geneviève, his work for Amiens, and a little later his beautiful hemicycle of the Sorbonne.

His example was a valuable lesson in what one might call thinking poetically in color upon large surfaces—above all in a noble simplicity. He did us some good and some harm; at times I am tempted to think much harm. He was a man to study, not to imitate. Many modern painters, French or American, have imitated or tried to imitate him without studying him very seriously. Instead of studying him they have looked hard, *too* hard at him.

Real extension of sympathy in either pupil or public, sympathy which teaches them to lift their eyes, comes rather from turning them to right and left than from staring at one focal light until they are hypnotized by it. To hitch your wagon to a star is wise, for the distance gives perspective. In the study of Titian, Correggio, Rembrandt, Veronese, lie little peril and much reward. These great painters came so long before us that they lived in an atmos-

ABBOTT H. THAYER: "Florence Protecting Her Arts." Decoration in the vestibule of the Walker Art Gallery, Bowdoin College

phere of different conditions. Our conditions are so separated from theirs that they safeguard us from the possibility of feeble imitation. But if we try to hitch our wagon to the light which blazes close to our eyes, we may find that we have followed not a star but a meteor.

This danger of lingering under a great contemporaneous light, instead of praying and working for light of our own, is exemplified especially by the devotees of Puvis. I have seen forty men at least who made forty shipwrecks for themselves in imitating him; and if you consider minor lights you will find that each year the task of the member of an exhibition jury is made a burden to him by the young painters who imitate some brilliant contemporary cleverly, attaining to all his lesser qualities and falling just so far short of his greater ones, that their pictures cannot at first be distinguished from the master's second-rate work.

When a great artist breaks the way, if you struggle along his path at a respectful distance, whether of time or space, you may note the proportions of his achievement and profit by them. If you follow closely in his every footstep, you will remain in his shadow forever. What proved at once most illuminating and misleading, in the example of Puvis de Chavannes, was the extraordinarily successful effect which he achieved in the Panthéon in Paris by constantly repeating or re-echoing in his work the

cool light-colored masonry of which the whole building was constructed.

Other qualities in the artist's work were as important, and perhaps even more fundamental to his contribution, but this quality was the most obvious. It sprang from a wise realization that, if you wish your decoration to cling to the walls of a building like a great drapery, like an epidermis even, you must marry it to the masonry by interfusion of tonality and color. He reapprehended a truth which had been partially forgotten or slighted, but which was patent to the old masters, namely, that true decoration is but a continuity of the surrounding masonry, not spots plastered upon it, whether made up of painted scenes or ornament. This success was so obvious that press and public celebrated it eagerly. It even caused a rival of Puvis to be subjected to rather unjust criticism.

For M. Jean Paul Laurens painted upon a neighboring wall another series of decorations, also referring to St. Geneviève; in them he used the strong and heavy colors special to his art. At once the public fell upon him, saying, "How inferior he is to Puvis!" and therein were unjust. To have said that as decorator Puvis had shown greater feeling and better judgment would have been quite correct, but in other important qualities of distribution of masses, arrangement of pattern, juxtaposition of what the French call *les pleins et les vides*, filled and empty spaces, Laurens

was a great decorator in his way. (Soon after they were painted I made rough small copies of both their decorations and verified my impressions. These two cycles date from more than thirty years ago; M. Laurens afterwards apparently changed his attitude completely in relation to decorative tonality and spacing. His large canvas, recently placed in the Capitole at Toulouse, is diffuse and scattered as to spots, and if compared with his work in the Panthéon is light in general tonality.)

Now, if the French public, inclusive of the artists, somewhat misapprehended and exaggerated the office of light coloration in the work of Puvis, it is not surprising that we follow suit in America; all the more that many of our contemporaneous American mural painters had worked in Parisian ateliers as young students. We all made the mistake of thinking that Puvis's method, admirably suited to certain kinds of building, was suited to every kind—that it and it only was decoration. But there is no such thing as absolutism in art—everything is relative; no matter how long continued, how static, a certain system of decoration may appear in history, we shall find if we watch it that it is in a condition of flux. The same laws are applicable to stagnation here as elsewhere. Puvis's decoration, delightfully suited to a certain sort of interior, would not have fitted another kind. As we stand before the light, even gay tonality of some of the churches of Lom-

bardy—Santa Maria at Saronno is a peculiarly interesting instance—we feel in looking at the charming panels of Luini, the delicate colors of Lanini, the almost rollicking angels of Gaudenzio Ferrari, playing away, a whole domeful of them, overhead, that Puvis's work might have figured worthily among them. Indeed—let us occasionally give the modern master his due—Puvis would have "bettered his instructions." Though he might not in his heads have approached the loveliness, sometimes consummate though more often insipid, of Luini's madonnas and maidens, the Frenchman's sense of distribution of masses would never have tolerated the overloaded confusion upon the walls of Luini's show church of San Maurizio in Milan, to say nothing of the huge fresco at Lugano. Certainly Puvis's work recalls not only that of the fourteenth century, but the light, clear tonality of the Lombard group; and when I first had the honor of meeting him I ventured in my youthful enthusiasm to recall this suggestion, thinking it to be a compliment to any man. "Believe me, sir," he replied, "I have never even seen the works of those gentlemen" (*ces messieurs*).

M. Puvis was the soul of courtesy, indeed of courtliness, but his answer had a slight savor of asperity. "*Ma pur si muove*," I thought to myself. "The Luinis which were in my mind are in the newly arranged room of the Louvre, recently much noticed by the public, and through which you pass fre-

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Louis C. Tiffany: Tiffany Chapel, crypt of Cathedral of St. John the Divine

quently." This I, however, did not say to him. The feeling and method of Puvis de Chavannes were absolutely suited to the great gray Panthéon, and he prepared his own surroundings in Amiens and at the Sorbonne. When he painted his decorations for Boston he was old, near the end of his life, dreaded a sea voyage, and did not come to America. Had he done so, I am convinced, that, confronted as he would have been by yellow Siena marble instead of his beloved gray surfaces, he would have modified the tone of some of his blues.

Lovely as the work is, especially in the side panels, I can still pass up-stairs anticipatively, even from the presence of this great French decorator, to the always stimulating work of Mr. Sargent. Nevertheless we should feel proud that through the initiative of McKim we possess an important series of canvases by the painter of the loveliest of modern decorations, the Hémicycle of the Sorbonne. Immediately after it, and indeed not after it in some respects, comes, in my opinion, the beautiful decoration by John La Farge in the Church of the Ascension, in New York. It has not had as much influence upon us as the work of Puvis, because the manner of it is so quiet that in its perfectness it offers no handle for the imitator to grasp. Besides leaving to us his splendid glass, La Farge has done other work in decorative painting, but my own admiration reverts with most pleasure to his "Ascension."

II

To return to our American practice: we, all of us, decided that the fundamental property of decorative painting was to be its lightness of coloration, and we said many wise things about its "clinging to the wall" and "not making a hole." We forgot that a gray wall surrounded by gray columns and capitals and cornices, in the Panthéon, for instance, was wholly different from a wall set with the richly carved woodwork of sixteenth-century churches, the deeply cut caissons of Venetian ceilings, even the delicate sculpture or intarsia of fifteenth-century Tuscany and Umbria. Sometimes the old Italians worked in very cheap material, and put all their money into the painted surface. They gave to Giotto in Padua, to Botticelli and Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, just huge boxes of plastered stone with some holes knocked in them for windows. To Tiepolo in the Labbia Palace the same sort of interior was accorded. The artists turned these rough places into dreams of beauty. In other cases the Italians used gold and dark woods in profusion and lavished rich marbles. Here was an opportunity for quite another treatment; and when Perugino or Veronese or Tiepolo entered such an interior with his assistants and his working-drawings he adapted himself and his tonalities at once to this different and richer surrounding.

We 'prentice hands here in America twenty-five years ago remembered Puvis's Panthéon, and thought that all decoration should be ultra-light in tone, forgetting, or rather not foreseeing, that the building commissioners in various States might like the native marbles for their capitols, and where richness of color existed in any local vein might very naturally encourage its exploitation. I recall the pride with which, filled as I was with this obsession of pale coloration, I showed to visitors that upon a certain one of my decorative panels a spot of pure yellow ochre looked almost a blot of ink. My pride in that performance has wholly departed, and it is probable that some of my comrades have shared my experience and my disillusionment. A further study of decoration has shown me that even upon a white surface it is not necessary to follow closely the example of Puvis. As one wanders through those exquisite rooms of the archives at the Hôtel de Soubise, to quote an example accessible to all, in the heart of Paris, and then remembers many other hôtels of the epoch of the dainty, of hair powder and red heels, one realizes that Natoire and Lemoyne and the rest of them were not one bit afraid of color—light, if you will, but clear, strong, and transparent, and never grayed into flat opacity.

The fact remains that we learned much of Puvis, and may still profit greatly by his example, provided we keep in mind that his is only one of a number of

systems, suited to differing sets of conditions, and realize that in art we have not one way but many ways leading to a successful result. I have given much space to the discussion of Puvis de Chavannes, because in the short story of our mural painting, as thus far developed, he has greatly counted.

XII

INFLUENCE OF THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

XII

INFLUENCE OF THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

I

THERE are some lovers of mural painting, and very cultivated lovers too, whose culture has not eliminated prejudice, who affirm that the work of the Italian fifteenth century is the expression of the last really decorative style, or who maintain that Puvis's painting alone is mural; or who, in some alcove of the eighteenth century, say that there only may be found the truly exquisite exemplar of decoration. They are those, in short, who would adopt a style and proclaim all others illegitimate. But why to-day, since we have no characteristic style, stop short with any style whatever? *What would have become of art if others had stopped;* why break off with Puvis and the nineteenth century, or with Pinturicchio and Perugino in the fifteenth, why not with Giotto in Padua of the fourteenth; why not with the stucco reliefs in the Baths of Diocletian; why not have stopped once for all with the sculptors of Abydos? Where would Perugino and Pinturicchio or Veronese or Puvis have been if men had not

loosened the conventional bonds of Egypt, and Byzantium had not followed Rome, and mediæval masons come after Romanesque monks? He who declares that any one style is right and departure from it wrong, is blocking the chariot-wheels of art.

There are people who would reply to this: "We do not wish to interfere with the roll of the chariot-wheels. Let them continue down the broad road of the general development of art; we only say that here (in the fifteenth century, for instance) the branch road of the truly decorative ends." In making their distinction, let these objectors note the following: When Gozzoli, Ghirlandajo, Botticelli, Perugino, Pinturicchio, and the others practised a certain kind of painting in their decorations, they painted in exactly the same way in their easel pictures, their altar-pieces, and their portraits; and just as soon and just as fast as they learned to broaden their portraits and easel pictures, they put precisely the same breadth into their decorative painting. *They* never had any doubt at all as to what they ought to do; they proposed to develop as rapidly as they might, and I do not think that we can logically bisect them, letting half their art progress and the other half remain fixed upon the vaulting as the last legitimate decoration. The style of Perugino and Pinturicchio is very beautiful, and may be used with great advantage in America, but it is not final; no style is.

Pinturicchio's vogue had come partly from the

C. Y. Turner: "Washington Watching the Assault on Fort Lee." Decoration for the Cleveland Court-House

Showing the artist working with assistants in his studio

fascinating and sensational restoration made in connection with the Papal Jubilee, and at the Pope's own expense, of the decorations in the Borgia apartments of the Vatican. These latter in a considerable measure focalized the decorative tendencies of the Italian fifteenth century, and exhibited them under a peculiarly brilliant light in the frescoes of Pinturicchio. In relation to this work, just as to that of Puvis, we may heartily sympathize with those who have admired and used it, may warmly approve it as one of the most excellent systems of decoration, and may still emphatically protest against those who say, "Now this I call real decoration" with the inference that broader and later methods are not truly decorative. Of course, it is true decoration, this work of Perugino and Pinturicchio, and very beautiful decoration; to lose it would deprive us of some of the world's chief treasure. But why not admit its logical succession, why tarry among the grotesques of the Vatican, and refuse to pass on into the *Stanze* with their greater artistic breadth and freedom, their more advanced and developed art; why remain with the entrancing richness, the formalized ultramarine and gold of Pinturicchio's vaulting to the Borgia apartments, and refuse to accept as equally true decoration those canvases of Veronese (or his school, who cares?) in the *Sala del Collegio* of the Ducal Palace in Venice, which, when seen at the right hour in their deep ceiling caissons,

fairly smoulder and glow with color? In one case, that of Pinturicchio, the surface vibrates from the juxtaposition of little spots of gold and pigment, of tiny relieved bits, of embossed pattern of belt or drapery; even, and very essentially, at times, from beautiful, accidental disintegration, and flaking away of the paint. In the other case, that of Veronese, the canvas pulsates and palpitates under the brush work. The effect is very nearly as rich, and is, on the whole, the result of a more masterly influence. The wise decorator will study both styles and profit by each of the two without prejudice to the other.

One very valuable property, especially to Americans, of the style of Pinturicchio and the fifteenth-century artists nearest akin to him, is that it is a safe style to begin with in a young school of painting—much safer than that of the sixteenth century, because much easier to handle well. In such rooms as those of the Cambio at Perugia, the Mantuan palaces, or many others in different cities, the architect himself has worked over the composition of line and space so much that it is left to the painter and sculptor to only, as it were, continue and amplify his patterns, and by just so much the task of painter and sculptor becomes easier. The frame of mouldings presented by the architect can stiffen and hold up and almost make easy a quite adequate decoration, where drawing and modelling, which are relatively inferior, pass muster easily within such a

splendid formal setting. In the *Cambio*, a great master; in the Sienese *Libreria*, a fertile, splendor-loving decorator immortalized the work, but in hundreds of rooms in Italy the same kind of formalized framing was filled out with grotesques and little figures and landscapes, powdered with gold or dependent wholly on pigment, and the painting was carried through by practically unknown men, yet with almost as much effect as was obtained in the rooms by Perugino and Pinturicchio.

This effect comes from the fact that the fifteenth-century painter thought first and last of his room as a *whole*, as a piece of architectonic completeness. It is as a lesson in the latter direction that the following of *quattrocento* art in America deserves high praise. Some of those who have followed it have achieved beautiful and exceptionally satisfactory results, and deserve our gratitude for their steadying and truly artistic influence—their solid contribution.

When the practice of art takes on a form new to the country in which it occurs, it is only natural to practitioners and public to refer at once to times and places in the past when and where the aforesaid form was in vogue. Thus when the Boston Public Library and the Chicago Exhibition called the attention of the public to mural painting, our American eyes reverted at once to Italy. In Puvis de Chavannes we saw the influence of the fourteenth

century, in Pinturicchio's Borgia apartments the influence of the fifteenth; there remained also to be reckoned with, as a stimulus, the decorative painting of the culminating period, as shown in the work of the sixteenth century.

About the year fifteen hundred Renaissance art came of age, the adolescent period was past; the practice of decoration was centred and focussed in Rome, whence but a little later it shifted to Venice. After and even while Pinturicchio and Ghirlandajo painted, there were younger artists who were beginning to breathe deeper and ask for more and freer wall-space. It was still the time of the very protagonists of *quattrocento* decoration; Botticelli, Perugino, Roselli, stood upon the scaffolding of the Sistine Chapel as alternating masters of the works. It was the heyday of their art, which had reached its zenith. It was the period of the Sala del Cambio in Perugia, of the Borgia apartments in the Vatican, the Libreria of Siena, when the pupil assistants (Michelangelo Buonarotti himself was among them as *garzone* of the *bottega* of Ghirlandajo) were gathering up all the most lovely decorative accessories of the Renaissance, the scrolls and vines and candelabra and romping panthers and nereids and cupids, and were disposing them about the figure compositions of their masters. It was the moment of the final, the richest, and in some respects the most admirable exemplification of a delightfully

decorative treatment of the walls. But already the protagonists began to realize that their road was widening. They had learned their lesson in perspective and anatomy; in the application of decorative detail they had turned their kaleidoscope over and over again to the creation of unending combinations of lovely pattern. They had diverged from the fourteenth-century road of Giotto, with its larger because simpler significance, and now they began instinctively to turn back to it again.

Perugino, the arranger of scrolls and medallions, the creator of strange decorative detail of helmets like chandeliers, and shields like ornamental box-lids; Botticelli, the illustrator of Dante; Ghirlandajo, the goldsmith—all began to feel the need of more elbow-room (Ghirlandajo indeed had longed for the town walls of Florence to cover with decoration). In painting the great rectangular compositions of the lower walls of the Sistina, these hierophants of fifteenth-century art carried as far as their development would compass, exactly what their partisans to-day look askance at in the practice of Veronese and Tintoretto and Tiepolo.

Probably the humanist, the scholar, is to a certain extent answerable for the earliest ventures. It is possible enough that Botticelli at first pushed his bark somewhat timorously out upon the waters of a wider experience, but without doubt a feeling for greater breadth, even in the superficial space accorded to

pictorial composition, was in the air. Signorelli's trumpets, sounding the Last Judgment in the Cathedral of Orvieto, sounded also the initial flourish to the triumphal march of sixteenth-century art. When he painted "The Blessed" and "The Damned," he might tuck episodes, scenes from the *Divina Commedia* down into the spandrel's point, and work them into a decorative pattern with scrolls and scutcheons; but when he came to his main subjects he felt that he wanted for each one no broken wall with lunettes and tondi, but a whole vast side of the Brizzi Chapel, just as Veronese, three-quarters of a century later, would have claimed the entire end of a refectory for a Marriage of Cana in Galilee.

Great men had been born, and were now working as apprentices, who were to be even unreasonably impatient of ornament. For such impatience is dangerous, and only the Signorellis and Michelangelos of this world can be contemptuous of decorative accessory without peril to themselves. Michelangelo cared so much for the human body that he rarely averted his eyes from it in favor of anything else in nature; but when all is said, his curiously involved head-dresses and his braided coiffures testify to his ability, when he chose to use ornament, even if he did think it unworthy of his time and skill, as long as he could make patterns of his mighty bodies, for that is what Michelangelo and Raphael, too, did with the personages of their action. They deliber-

Louis David Vaillant: "The Picnic." Decorative panel

ately made them into great decorative patterns. Correggio also was inclined to shake off the bonds of ornament, and wear, as it were, only loose garlands. He trellised his cupids of San Paolo, and let his babies look out from oval bowers of leaves, free from any risk of catching their feet or hands in the tangle of curling tendrils to formalized scrolls. He spread feather-beds of clouds for the Apostles, who recline and sometimes sprawl upon the pendentives of San Giovanni Evangelista, and he filled the dome of the Cathedral of Parma with naked bodies. Possibly, no one cut loose so completely from tradition as he did, but then Correggio is always an exception in the history of art, the exception that proves the rule, the only instance of a prophet unhonored save in his own country, the only giant who during his lifetime was passed over by such a visiting connoisseur as Bembo, and was apparently known—and then largely by fortunate accident of friendship with Veronica Gambara—to only one of the arch patrons of the Renaissance, the great marchioness, the Marchesana Isabella d'Este.

With Correggio and the protagonists of the Roman School, came the colossi, whose mural painting we should lose if we admitted as decorative only fifteenth-century art. In fact, just at this period came the culmination of the change in painting which ushered in the mural panel, vast in size and in subject. In place, for instance, of Ghirlandajo's

wall in the Sala of the Palazzo Vecchio of Florence, to take a typical example, we have a Marriage of Cana by Paul Veronese; in place of Perugino's vaulting to the Hall of the Exchange in Perugia, full of scrolls and geometrical patterns and figurines, we have a cupola of Parma by Correggio, filled with clouds and angels. As in any very radical change in systems, potential in either case for delight, there was great gain and great loss on either side—great loss of delicate, exquisite richness, and architectonic completeness, great gain of simplicity and breadth and nobility. And, as in every such instance, we must try to adjust ourselves, to balance both sides of the ledger, and get profit from the loss, since we must have loss in our profit. Much of the older lesson could persist in its influence, much of the delicate ornament could be preserved, and could still enrich and engarland the great new compositions. And these same great new compositions were to become the most renowned examples in the entire history of painting. The continuance of the fifteenth-century system of decoration would have involved the renunciation, the loss, of these world-famous works, these teachers and sources of inspiration.

The partisans of *quattrocento* art would break up the wall into relatively small divisions, and spot the great panel with gold and pattern. Such an ordering is lovely and decorative, but the splendid breadth and volume of the sixteenth-century sys-

tem is even more valuable, and it is only upon wide stretches of wall that the great outpouring becomes possible. Had it not been for the vast mural panel, Raphael, Correggio, Veronese, Tintoretto would not have found space to open their mighty wings, and the world would never have known Michelangelo as painter. Had the *quattrocento* ordering been retained, art would have been robbed of the Cana of the Louvre, the Crucifixion of Tintoretto, the ceilings of Tiepolo, the great wall canvases of Rubens and Vandyck, and so many others beside. Could we spare them?

To be suspicious and uneasy regarding very large canvases is natural enough, because there are so many bad ones, and the reason for this badness is as patent—it is because to do good ones is very difficult. But this fact affords no reason for giving them up; rather, on the contrary, the very strongest reason in the world for admiring them and studying them above all other forms of decoration—studying them as the examples most perfectly suited to the worthiest celebration of the noblest themes of the past, the present, or, so far as we can yet know, of the future. In that future will be raised here in America capitols and court-houses and libraries, vast buildings of all descriptions in which will be signalized the *fastes* and some of the *tristia*, too, of the commonwealth. In the making of this celebration and commemoration we shall need the lovely motives of the

fifteenth century, modernized into appropriateness, to bind together our subjects, but when these become events of national import, battles on sea and land, and apotheoses of inventions and discoveries, the victories in short of war and peace, we may not, we *must* not, crowd them into little panels, medallions, octagons, and lunettes; we *must* give them breathing space, the wide stretch of wall which Veronese and Raphael and Rubens loved.

And just as Raphael and Veronese and Rubens and Tiepolo went on one after the other, adding each some new element—mind you, I do not say always improving, but always adding and changing—so in our case we shall modify and alter, loosening our surface here, tightening it there, finding new modes of handling, practising them, pushing them for a while to the very front as ultimate, then abandoning them for others, forging always new links in the chain of the arts.

II

It is easy to see why the traveller in Italy should sometimes conceive prejudice against mural painting on a very large scale. The practice of using vast canvases was at first coincident with the greatest moment of art, but necessarily and by inexorable law that moment soon lapsed. Naturally the epoch of decadence lasted longer, and produced more; and

just as naturally the visitor to Italy sees more of its productions and is unpleasantly affected.

After the use came the abuse of such decoration, and it is against the abuse that one instinctively and properly rebels. Toward the end of the sixteenth century the painted outpouring of figures became hysterical, the gods and nymphs, heroes and sages, who already covered the walls and ceilings of the great sala, swarmed out through the windows and spread and climbed upon the façade. We mourn the fading of Giorgione's fresco upon the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi* because he was Giorgione. We like to feel that he and his comrade Titian were not yet far enough within the threshold of the sixteenth century to depart from the great traditions of architectonic treatment. But when we hear that Tintoretto painted a whole cavalry fight "for the price of his colors and to show his hand" upon the façade of a Venetian palace, our remembrance of Jacopo's audacious *disinvoltura* of spirit in the face of any hard-and-fast ruling makes us shrug our shoulders. The practice of using huge canvases had been abused. When a big thing is weak it is more offensive than a little one. We instinctively look for an observation of proportion appropriate to the character of the work, and should probably not care to see even Botticelli's "Venus," for instance, as big as the *Delphica;* and this is why we are anxious and suspicious regarding large canvases, for what happened

in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Italy may happen here and now, though I shall not add *a fortiori*, for a young and growing school is safeguarded from some things by its very timidity.

Furthermore our American school of painting, young as it is, is on the upward trend, and we must take some risks, trying at least to turn our blunders into stepping-stones. The small panel, to be sure, is apt to be safer than the large one; a song is easier to write acceptably than a symphony, but the fact would not excuse discontinuing symphonies, and as for safety in mural painting, if that is what you are after, the logical end is plain kalsomine. If the great wall painting be a complete success, and it sometimes was in the hands of Michelangelo, Veronese, Tintoretto, Rubens, it is apt to be as highly organized and vital as any painting that has been produced, and perhaps most inclusive of all.

After Veronese and Tintoretto the crest of the wave broke, and their followers took easily, too easily, what they liked from the wreckage which lay spread around. Even for the modern painter, humble though he should be before memory of the past, there is a certain temptation of the devil which comes with especial force to the decorator who looks down from the high places of his scaffold upon great stretches of wall, and thinks that the world is his if he will only easily and quickly throw something fluent and attractive upon the said

ELIHU VEDDER: "Rome." Decoration in the Walker Art Gallery, Bowdoin College

Example of figure and ornament, combined in the manner of the early sixteenth century

space. The theatre for his display is so brilliant in its possibilities—summary work seen at a distance may be so effective—and there is so much which he could borrow easily from his souvenirs, that it is very hard for the decorator to resist, to nerve himself for hard work, and, above all, hard thinking. But that is what he must do unless he would prove a nuisance even, since slight work becomes irritating and finally grows offensive to the intelligent-minded, so that its existence works real injury to the future of mural painting and disposes us to reject it *in toto* in favor of simple pattern or colored marble.

And this is the bane of decadent art, that "born too late in a world" of art methods made too easy, its practice leaves the onlooker indifferent at first, then irritates him, then disgusts him.

XIII

MODERN TECHNIC AND PRESENT TENDENCY

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SEVERAL of the foregoing chapters have been devoted to the derivation of our practice in mural painting; of course, any practice involves preference, but when personal preference becomes so burning a question that we have to plead for even toleration, we are pretty sure to find that technical execution, the manner of using the tools, is what we have to discuss. The most narrow-minded of artists is naturally the student, because he is immediately and embarrassingly preoccupied, not with methods, but with *a* method. By means of this method he hopes to attain his ideal. Now whatever may be said about "Feeling" and "Freedom" and their logical sequence of annihilation of methods, we still have some schools and some students left, and we have tried to show that the school ideal of the present is vigor of presentation.

Upon a canvas or a wall all that an artist has to depend upon, for personal expression, is a flat, painted surface; to make that surface vital and entertain-

ing through the manner of application of the pigment seems to be the first preoccupation of the painter of to-day. In any discussion of this preoccupation it is interesting to touch briefly upon its development, its advances and retrogressions in the past, since the best plea for toleration is made in a showing of diverse excellences.

The progression, throughout the centuries, toward freedom of handling in painting is not successively graduated. It is not like the progression of a piece of music in which the theme has been planned from the beginning, and is sketched, then stated, then developed. Hints there are for development of brush practice, but they seem be the accidental results of temporary procedure. Such are the hints of broken color and vibration afforded in mosaic work, the foreshadowing of the *pointilliste* in the little gilded or bronzed or colored dots which filled the wall paintings of the Umbrians, the gilded rays from embossed bursts of glory, the glittering patterns impressed by the tool on haloes, or upon deliciously dainty raiment for angels, who were lucky enough to be robed by the splendor-loving Sienese. Disintegration of surface and color change have often helped instead of hurting these mixtures of paint and *gesso*, till some of the tinselled, celestial dandies of Crivelli, for instance, have become really splendid in their scintillant surface. But this is partly accidental, and it is not brush-handling, for

subtile and varied brush-handling could only begin to grow after a vehicle had been discovered elastic enough to permit dexterity to attain freedom.

At first, the new oil medium only softened modelling instead of emphasizing it. With the Van Eycks, with Antonello, with Giovanni Bellini in his Frari Madonna, the manner of the making is hidden in some of the most beautiful pictures ever painted; but soon men became quite willing that the brush strokes should be seen; and a little later to make them obvious, to make them count *as* strokes, was a desideratum. In the work of Titian, who was almost the earliest to loosen his surface, preoccupation with construction never came first, and he thought, not so much about how he placed, or which way he dragged his brush spot, as about what color it was, and what should be the color of the spot beside it. He wanted his canvas to tell at a reasonable distance, and it is probable that change of eyesight, as his years piled themselves up, had not a little to do with the way in which he smudged the pigment with his thumb or with a rag, did *anything* indeed, in supreme indifference to all except result.

Neither Titian nor any other Venetian could have come to heavy color-loading abruptly. The departure was too radical, the traditional indispensability of transparency was too compelling. They were every one of them workers in tempera, and they could not forget it all at once. They began their

progression by putting more oil in their cups and widening the brush sweep. Correctness of sweep depended on the man; Veronese, who could draw and construct, accomplished it easily and often. Tintoretto achieved it with mastery, when he was willing to take the trouble, as in his "Miracle of St. Mark," and did it in some of the worst of his Scuola di San Rocco canvases, as if he had been armed with a dirty broom, a bucket of oil, and a finished insouciance. Palma Vecchio came somewhere near it in two or three pictures, but usually painted women who were like golden balloons of epidermis. Fluid breadth had, however, at last been accomplished in the best paintings of Veronese and Tintoretto, with pigment thinly but loosely and easily swept onto the canvas, and reinforced here and there, in the lights, with slightly loaded passages. Tintoretto left no one behind strong enough to take up the Italian succession, but the funeral in Venice was closely followed by the baptism in Siegen of a little Peter Paul, who was to open the pathway to modern technic. Rubens, Vandyck, and their group in their larger canvases developed still further the fluent ease of Veronese, and in some of their works, notably in some of their heads, began to paint solidly *dans la pâte*, with brushes which left a handsome grain behind them. With Frans Hals came a breadth which in its unerring assuredness has not been surpassed, and Rembrandt was, perhaps,

the first artist who frankly entertained himself with pigment, just as pigment, that is to say, as a pasty substance, which could be thickened or thinned, spread heavily or not, in planes or lumps, parsimoniously or abundantly, with a hand which caressed, kneaded—did just what it chose, in fact. Sometimes keeping his mask in deep, contrasted shadow, he loaded a helmet with light till it seemed built out as if with *gesso*. Sometimes his surface was full of crumb, friable-looking, again it was dissolved until it fairly ran with golden liquid, then, presto! —he returned to a porcelain-like smoothness, recalling his earliest work, and on the morrow leaped forward again to the breadth of his Syndics. Some writer on music has said that here or there in Bach may be found the suggestion for *anything* in music; and one might say that almost any surface handling may be found, in embryo or completed development, between the Zuyder Zee and the Maas, and in the years that made up the seventeenth century.

Here was an overpowering inheritance for the lover of brush-handling, and it was varied and continued elsewhere and later. In Spain Velasquez came, noble, sometimes impeccable, the monarch of all brush workers, so sincere, so simple, and so logical, that he beat the most brilliant on their own ground. With Hals, for instance, one *notices* the handling first of all; with Velasquez one only *feels* it in the perfection of the result, a result aided by the purity

which he maintains in his grays; whereas Hals varies in his color, passing from marvellous force and clarity in some of his Haarlem corporation pictures to inky blackness in some of his later work. In Spain, too, Goya followed later, audacious, disconcerting, fascinating. In the French eighteenth century, surface ran a whole gamut; sometimes the languor and vapors of the boudoir entered into the artist's brush work, which again turned to hard commonplaceness in portraits that, nevertheless, were highly characterized. Boucher, at times charming, was often cheap; but Watteau, Lancret, Pater, whether melancholy or frivolous, kept a jewelled suggestion in their surface. Latour's little masques in the museum of St. Quentin astound us to-day by their vitality, both of execution and character, and Chardin brought to his brush-handling and color a quality at once so beautiful and so sterling that it must satisfy the most exacting. Meanwhile, on the other side of the Alps, a solitary figure, Tiepolo, performed with the brush point, whether in oil or fresco, feats of *disinvoltura*, which for downright skilfulness have, perhaps, been unequalled in the history of art. Then came the deluge, and except where the English school, inheritor of Rubens through Vandyck, of Titian through Reynolds, stood safe and strong in its insularity, tradition was swept away by the French Revolution.

Surface turned in the hands of David into some-

From a photograph, copyright by Curtis & Cameron

HENRY OLIVER WALKER: "The Boy of Winander." Lunette in the Library of Congress

(In the series devoted to poetry)

thing as hard as his own pitiless political creed, though there were occasional rare returns to the past, as in the wonderful portrait of a young man in the Salle des Quatre Cheminées of the Louvre by Prudhon. But even he, great artist though he was, in most of his oil-paintings shared with all the rest an absolutely uninteresting handling which had become common property. This benumbed condition of one of the technical qualities of painting lasted for a while. Then the wings of the Romanticists began to flutter uneasily, and presently the landscapists found their grove of the Muses in the forest of Fontainebleau, their Pierian spring in Barbizon.

With a check of but fifty years at most, brush work had developed in one way or another, not always steadily advancing, but changing, moving, keeping alive, from Titian to Millet. It is all a great, wonderful picture-book in which may be found the excuse if not the entire justification of those who now sometimes preoccupy themselves too entirely with surface, and surely it is open also for the confusion of those Sir Charles Coldstreams of post-impressionism who declare that, as with the crater of Vesuvius, "there is nothing in it." That there is *everything* in it one may not aver, or rather we may not say that everything has already come *out* of it—the upheavals of the mountain will continue as long as there is planetary heat, and always there will be something new, at least in combination. To just

what forms of combination the future will turn its kaleidoscope the artist can no more predict than can any other man. Assuredly the few last years have been whirling about the kaleidoscopic tube in what has seemed at times an almost frenzied pursuit of novelty. Nevertheless, a study of our American tendencies in the present, while it may discover and set down in the chart dangerous reefs, yields also abundant material for both pride and hope.

Mr. Kenyon Cox, in his admirable book, has shown with his usual lucidity that the methods of the Venetian painters and Correggio in the treatment of color have not been surpassed since they laid down their brushes—perhaps never will be surpassed. Indeed, their canvases are so beautiful that we need not look for anything better, but, on the other hand, we shall not be unreasonable if we occasionally ask for something different. No one could wish for more golden color upon flesh, which is yet exactly like flesh and not like a yellow glaze over paint, than one sees upon the torso and limbs of Correggio's "Antiope" in the Louvre, or the marvellously rich yet delicate passages in Titian's "Flora" of the Uffizi in Florence, or in his "Madonna with Saint Jerome" in the same gallery. What canvas surface could blaze more splendidly than Tintoretto's "Saint Agnes" in the Orto Church of Venice. If you go to it at the right hour of the day it seems fairly incandescent. Again, as one stands under Veronese's

"Triumph of Venice," the huge oval canvas in the Ducal Palace, one never ceases to marvel as to how its maker could have found so much glow and so much freshness, so much gold yet so much silver. Tiepolo in his way is as astonishing. Perhaps no other methods can produce such lasting glow and transparency as the thin painting with glazes and occasional loaded passages practised by the Venetians.

But, on the other hand, while cordially agreeing for the most part with Mr. Cox, I am inclined to go even further than he does: not to stop with the Venetians, but to pass on and claim distinct qualities for opaque and loaded color also. Indeed, we cannot stop with the Venetians and their transparent methods in technic any more than we can stop at fifteenth-century decoration with Pinturicchio and the *quattrocentisti.* Mr. Cox admits this and records the changes as readily as does any one, his claim being simply that change in art does not necessarily mean advance. Such a claim is incontrovertible, if by advance we infer a higher plane along the whole horizon. But in chronicling development, opaque and loaded pigment, even if not as ideally suited to decoration as transparent color, must be reckoned with, because they have become the desiderata and therefore the working material of the artist of to-day. In a dome, to be sure, or any mural painting placed very far from the eye, loaded pigment can no longer be made out as

an attractive element of surface treatment, but when seen near at hand it is sometimes effective. As far as the masters of transparent color are concerned, I am on my knees to Veronese and Pinturicchio; they have my worshipping admiration; in its way nothing can be better than either of them; but there are other ways; man's heart keeps on beating or he dies, and he must change as he goes. Perhaps the new ways will never again be as good as the old ones, but there is always room for hope. Tiepolo had already in the eighteenth century advanced in some respects beyond his inspiration, Veronese; and if the forms and spirit of art change from generation to generation the technic which expresses them is sure to undergo modification, some of it hampering, some of it even hurtful, but some of it surely helpful. There are perhaps aspects of nature which can be better expressed in opaque and loaded color than in the relatively slight washes and transparent glazes of the Venetians.

Mr. Cox says very truly that much of our loaded pigment is mud; so it is, but the best of it is not. As I look at the work of some of our powerful painters and stand before their pounding seas battering great rocks, I cannot believe that the sense of weight and volume, the feeling communicated that this water is rubbing away the coasts and carving the earth into new shapes, could be given by thin painting with glazes. When I look at the

extremely distinguished cool blue sea in another artist's picture at the Metropolitan, I feel that his technic in turn is exactly suited to what he wishes to create. Before a canvas in a corner of the Vanderbilt Gallery of one of our academy exhibitions, a year or two ago, I said to myself: "Is it necessary to use so much pigment that it catches the light unpleasantly?" Then I stood back at the proper distance, and replied to myself: "Yes, the artist is quite right; by his method he has given actual existence in paint to a huge mass of mountain. We feel in looking at it that it has been heaved up mightily by the underforces of the earth, and the vigorous loading of the color helps greatly, at least as it seems to me, in the impression."

So it is with the intense, vital work of many of our artists, the vigor of the handling helps the landscape to exist. Look at some of the powerfully painted pictures in the Metropolitan. Great masses of opaque color have been used, truly; but consider them carefully, and you will see how these splashes of pigment have been caressed afterwards, and by subtility and glazing have been worked into delicate harmonies; here in these canvases are Venetian methods of glaze and scumble and light loading laid directly on top of the heavy modern painting. Whether such methods will last chemically is quite another matter. Of course, the less pigment you use the more you diminish certain unpleasant

chances, but I have never heard anything conclusive on this subject, and hope and believe that the dangers have been greatly exaggerated.

At every period, even the most eclectic—and the present is assuredly that—you may find, if you look for it, a prevailing tendency in technic. Ours stands out and does not have to be sought; it is the tendency to strive for vigor of presentation. In sculpture Rodin has been an exemplar; in painting we are proud of an American, Sargent, who as painter overtops in his sheer force even most of the painters of the past. With him, and with a hundred others, vigor of handling has so entered into our practice, and so fascinated our regard, that it will, I believe, remain a dominant quality in the art of to-day. It is an enormously difficult quality to cultivate to its highest point, because that highest point includes conciliation of vigor with depth and even with delicacy, since perforce nothing is complete without its complement. To even approach it closely is enormously difficult, for the added volume of pigment renders the technical task still harder than before, the riddle of the Sphinx is yet more troublesome to answer.

Yet I cannot believe that in our time we could return in our creative wish to the portraits, for instance, of Van Eyck or Holbein, or even of Mor, after the portraits to which we are now accustomed, with their volume of pigment and broad handling.

We *could* not do them, you say, if we would. No, we could not, because we could not wish hard enough for that kind of excellence to love and labor it into existence. The expression of our aspiration sounds to other chords, our labor is accomplished more with our nerves. The Van Eycks and Holbeins, in their profound sincerity, their quiet and noble stateliness, their unsurpassability, may have been finer than anything we can do to-day, but to compare them with modern work is neither here nor there. The gentleman in shining armor and brocade may have been better to look at than the man who sits to us, but our business is with the latter; our way is our way, and in its immediacy it is in the main a sum total of derivations from what surrounds us.

XIV

IN CONCLUSION

XIV

IN CONCLUSION

Dexterous, subtile, powerful, and beautiful handling of surface has been achieved by modern American painters. Again as in the seventeenth century there are seen surfaces crumby or running, loaded everywhere or loaded only in places, spotted and striped or united and smooth. One would say that everything which drag or scumble or glaze could do is within the grasp of our artists; great variety and great distinction of color and of tone have been achieved: our painters have learned to speak their language; what are they going to say with it? Rembrandt said sublime things. Titian and Rubens spoke nobly, Giorgione passionately. But above all, Rembrandt said, Holland! Rubens, Flanders! Giorgione, Italy! Will our painters say, America? Assuredly yes, in time. Already our French accent has lessened to the proportions of a tonic to our enunciation—already our landscape-painters are national, and of a certainty our portrait-painters and sculptors and our mural painters are becoming so.

In entering any of our best exhibitions to-day the

visitor is struck at once by the quality of tone of the whole as compared with what he would have found there only a few years ago. Our sculptors, men and women alike, are making an extraordinary showing. As to mural painting, which has been the subject of this book, no field is wider, more embracing, more capable of offering a career to the younger generation of artists, if they will enter upon it with an earnest spirit, and a willingness to study commensurate with its exactions. I cannot too strongly express my belief in the potentiality of the future if we will only think hard enough, and work hard enough, and believe hard enough. All plans can be bettered, all appropriations be more generously made, and more wisely expended, all work can be better done, if we will only study the matter in hand closely enough, study it unitedly, and look back intelligently at the past with the future in our minds. Prodigious lessons lie spread out behind us, and we have only to look over our shoulder to perceive them, without once needing to turn our footsteps backward. On the contrary, we may push forward, architects, sculptors, and painters all together, putting American dexterity and adaptability at the service of the lesson learned.

Men talked and acted two thousand years ago much as we are doing to-day, putting aside problems of art in favor of budget and plan of campaign: "the unnecessary" in favor of the "necessary," "the

Copyright by A. R. Willett, 1910

A. R. Willett: Panel in a court-room of the Mahoning County Court-House, Youngstown, Ohio.

(Mr. Willett has [illegible] in my decoration [illegible] Library of Congress as well as in many of his other decorations.—L. H. B.)

superfluous" in favor of the "vital"; and two thousand years later the unnecessary and superfluous is what remains vital and cogent, a concrete entity and a compelling influence. Now, when a man is a power in the land one of his rewards is the ability to acquire some surpassing "old master." When a royal visitor comes to us his first journey is to the treasures of the art museum. Do not let us mistake; some of the stones set up by architects to-day, some of the messages of the sculptor and painter, will be effective still when some of the ideas now current in every brain and influencing hourly action are superseded and have faded from men's minds. Good art is tremendous in its endurance. How essential is it, then, that we pay tribute of earnest, single-hearted thoughtfulness in watching and nursing the creative impulse, lest in place of what should endure we pile up rubbish that is hard even to sweep away.

And in the payment of such tribute we shall but conform to the wisdom of the ages, for after the patriot there was no one whom the older civilizations could so lastingly bless as the artist. The patriot gave the country its existence and preserved it, developed its resources as farmer and merchant, and defended it as soldier. The artist set up the landmarks by which the city was known; he gave it the distinctive shape which was dear to each townsman; he made the familiar sky-line which told the returning traveller that he was nearing home; he gave their

character to the well-known streets, and set town hall, church, and court-house in their places. The money of the merchant, the labor of the farmer and artisan, were the solid base upon which all these arose; and this treasure which they gave remains to them still, and pedestals their memory as enduringly as their monuments. But the artist was the creator; he stamped the city materially as truly as ever coiner struck the impression of the die into the soft gold and left there the lily of the florin, or the winged lion of the sequin. And the home-sick wanderer, when far away, carried with him in his mind the creation of the artist.

And it is so to-day. The traveller is thinking of home, of his native city, but what represents it to him in memory is Christopher Wren's great dome of Saint Paul's—a blue-gray bubble upon a horizon of sepia; or it is Soufflot's Panthéon, topping its wave-crest sky-line of houses; or the twin towers of Notre Dame, and the long vapor-canopied stretch of river curving westward to where the sunset shines through that giant loop of masonry, the Arch of the Star. What is the city of Cologne to any of us but the huge church which, as the Rhine steamer recedes with us, grows and grows and dwarfs its surroundings till it seems bigger than the town? Strasburg is a spire pointing upward from the flat green plain of Alsace; Pisa is that one solemn group of buildings, the mausoleum of her dead liberty. And thus to

each of us his native city means some familiar shape, and each, when distant from it, like Dante exiled from Florence, longs for "*il mio bel San Giovanni.*"

Every civilization of the past has turned to the fine arts to make a nobler setting for its daily life. Each has looked backward and learned of the forerunners; and we must do even as they. We may do as France has done: go and sit at the feet of the masters and learn to achieve that wider art which embellishes not only our individual houses but our city. For France has sat at the feet of Italy. She has sent her architects, painters, sculptors to Rome. Of her great mural painters, Paul Baudry went straight to Michelangelo, Raphael, and Correggio; Puvis de Chavannes to Giotto, Luini, and the Lombards. Adding their native genius to the study of great examples, her architects have laid out Paris so cunningly, and created so many beautiful temples, courts of law, fountains, and squares, that the eye travels almost insensibly from vista end to vista end, and rests successively upon these different architectural creations as upon so many points of patriotic progress along the path of civilization, until, last of all, it reaches the town hall, where, upon its façades, the dead worthies of France stand sculptured in scores—patriots, artists, writers, workers of all kinds; the choir invisible made visible in stone—at once a commemoration, a decoration, and an eternal stimulus.

As it is in Paris, so, let us hope, it shall one day be in America when we shall have put our best art where it belongs, at the top, in the public building; for we shall have a national school when, and not until, art, like a new Petrarch, goes up to be crowned at the capitol.

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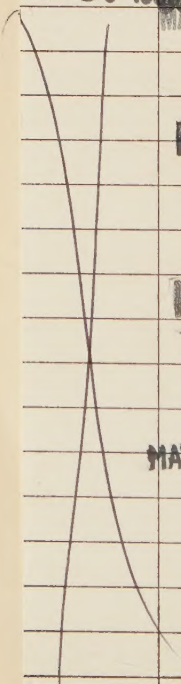
DATE DUE

21875
47354
17 Feb'76
14 May'79
APR 19 1982
OCT 17 1985
MAY 26 1987
FEB 19 1991
MAR 15 1994
JAN 02 1997
MAY 15 1997
PLS
FEB 4 1998
MAY 02 2001



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A. Blashfield
Mural painting in
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